

# TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING THE QUR'AN

KAUSAR NIAZI



## PREFACE

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It was in 1967 that Pakistan Television Service asked me to deliver lectures on a few selected verses of the Holy Qur'an under the title "Mash'al-e-Rah" (Wayside Light). The time fixed for each lecture was only five minutes. One minute was to be covered by reciting the Holy Qur'an, half a minute for translation of the verses and three and a half minutes were devoted to the explanation (exegesis) of the verse recited. Afterwards the title was changed to "Basirat" (Insight). This programme is still being daily and regularly telecast and occasionally I join in it.

"To put a thing in a nutshell" is a phrase I had often heard and it came to me by way of experience when I had to say something brief yet comprehensive in three and a half minutes. Another difficulty was experienced when I had to take care that whatever I should say must be something on which all schools of thought in Islam agree, and only those aspects of the Qur'anic teachings should be talked upon which have a bearing on our practical life. Consideration should also be given to the desirability of adopting a style and a mode of argument



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which is in keeping with the intellectual level of the new generation westernly educated and, above all, that all those doubts should be dispelled which the modern science have injected into the minds of the youth.

I cannot claim that I have met with adequate success in this attempt, but the fact remains that my efforts in this direction were appreciated by people all over the country. People in general expressed their approving sentiments through letters and some of the learned persons also offered me encouragement.

I have been rather inactive in so far as writing is concerned. I never wrote down the talks delivered in connection with the "Mash'al-e-Rah" (Wayside Light) and "Basirat" (Insight) programmes. I never drafted these talks and I was afraid that all this labour would be confined to television waves, but I must thank my gifted son, Farooq, who took down notes while watching the television programme, although he could not cover more than half of what I lectured. However, about half of these exegetic lectures, spread from 1967 to 1969 programmes, were preserved in black and white. It was an Urdu daily of Lahore that published some parts of these lectures in its columns.

Since a long time my friends insisted upon the printing of these lectures in a book form. I had a mind

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that the verses of which the exegeses were not written should also be explained before the book is published, but the existing record of writings became so voluminous that I had to give up the idea. If God wills, the rest of the selected verses of the Holy Qur'an, which have an intimate bearing on our daily life, will also be explained and two more volumes of equal size shall be presented to the public.

For this TV programme of lectures on the Holy Qur'an, I have been consulting approximately twenty exegeses of the Qur'an in Arabic and Urdu. These include *Tafsir-i-Kabir*, *Tafsir-i-Mazhari*, *Tafsir-i-Haqqani* as also the *Bayan-ul-Qur'an*. But I have derived the greatest benefit from the exegetical attempts of Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi, particularly in view of the requirements of modern life. If there is any merit in this book, its credit goes to these exegeses and if any demerit is detected therein, the fault is, surely, mine.

In case this humble service of mine is found useful in explaining the meanings of the Holy Qur'an, the readers are requested to kindly invoke blessings of the Almighty Allah for the author whose life may not be free from faulty conduct.

KAUSAR NIAZI



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## LEGACY OF THE PROPHETS

وَوَصَّى بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَيْنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يُبْرَى  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى لَكُمْ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُوا  
إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ۝

“And this was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons, and so did Jacob: “O my sons! Allah hath chosen the Faith for you; then die not except in the Faith of Islam” (ii. 132).

Both from the viewpoint of its meaning and message this verse of the Holy Qur'an is a most comprehensive verse. It tells us, firstly, that all the Prophets, who came before the Last Prophet Muhammad, and including the latter, invited people to accept Islam and nothing else than Islam. Whether it is Abraham or Jacob, whether it is Moses or Jesus, all of them believed in the same faith. Therefore, it is the duty of every Muslim to believe in all of these Prophets, to respect them equally and to realise it that rejection of any one of these Prophets would mean the rejection of all, including the Last Prophet, Muhammad.

The second point stressed in this verse is that all the Prophets laid it down as their last will to the



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inmates of their house that they should die as the followers of Islam, that is, in a state of obedience to God. What this means is that since the time of death is not known, everyone should pass his life in accordance with the Divine Laws, so that when death does come to any one of you, it finds you as one who obeys God.

Statisticians say that one hundred persons die every minute and in the whole of twenty-four hours of day and night, one hundred fifty thousand persons meet their death. Nobody knows when his name will get included in the list of these one hundred and fifty thousand. Therefore, it is but practical wisdom to avail of our life-term and pass our days in strict obedience to the will of God.

### DUE RECITATION OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ

“Those to whom We have sent the Book study it as it should be studied” (ii. 121).

In this holy verse, those People of the Book have been praised who used to recite their heavenly book, the Torah, and recited it as it should be recited. This also entails the praise of those believers (Muslims) who recite this last heavenly book (the Holy Qur'an) as it should be recited.

Recitation of the Holy Qur'an is considered as a superb mode of worship in our religion. The Holy Prophet has declared that at the time of the recitation of the Holy Qur'an, reading of every letter brings a reward equal to the reward of ten virtuous acts. In another place, the Prophet has said that the recitation of the Qur'an is tantamount to talking with God. The Prophet said that as long as a person is busy reciting the Qur'an, God remains attentive to him. But this stage in its perfection can be reached only by a person who recites the Holy Qur'an as it should be recited.

What are the requirements for the recitation of the Holy Qur'an? A comprehensive reply to this



question would imply three types of requirements, i.e. the exterior, internal and practical. The exterior requirement consists in reading the Holy Qur'an correctly word by word and in pronouncing the letters of the Qur'an in the right way. The internal requirement is that of trying to understand the meaning of the Holy Qur'an. A person who reads the Qur'an should know the import of its words and verses, and understand what the Qur'an requires of him. The best way to realise this end is to learn the Arabic language, the language of revelation. But if this is not possible, a man should read authoritative translations and exegesis of the Holy Qur'an. The third requirement is that, after reading the Qur'an, its practical commands should be observed in actual life. The purpose of its revelation can be well achieved when life is lived according to the commands of the Qur'an individually as well as collectively.

Our individual and national salvation depends upon how far we fulfil these three requirements of the recitation of the Holy Qur'an.

Iqbal, the poet philosopher of the East, has rightly stated that:

"This is a living Book, the Qur'an,  
Whose wisdom is eternal and unfailing.  
If you want to live as Muslims.

This is not possible except by adhering to the  
Qur'an."

### DIRECTIONS ARE NOT SACRED

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ  
وَجْهَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

"To Allah belong the East and the West: whithersoever ye turn there is the Presence of Allah: for Allah is All-Pervading, All-Knowing" (ii 115).

After the advent of the Holy Prophet of Islam, the Muslims for some time faced Jerusalem in offering their prayers. This was their first Qiblah. But at last the time came when, with a view to forging unity among the Muslims and rallying them to one centre, Ka'bah was fixed as the direction in which they were to offer their prayers. The People of the Book (Jews and Christians) raised many objections to this change. One of their objections was that the Ka'bah cannot be fixed as the Qiblah (direction) for prayers because it did not lie in any sacred direction.

Before the rise of Islam, mankind was steeped in many superstitions. One of them was that people regarded certain directions as sacred. Under the influence of sun-worship, it became a matter of common belief that since the sun rises in the East and



sets in the West, these two directions are sacred. The Holy Qur'an refuted this tendentious argument. It said that the East and the West both belong to God.

According to the rules of the Arabic grammar, "I" in "Lillah" is used for particularisation. This means that the two directions are particular to God, they belong to Him and have been created by Him. Moreover, God is so All-Embracing that He comprehends both the East and the West, but He Himself cannot be comprehended by anything. He is free from bodily involvement. Therefore, it is sheer ignorance and polytheism to think that only these two directions are special to Him. It was to dispel this wrong notion that God said: "Whithersoever ye turn, ye will find His Presence." He further explained that, in addition to His All-Embracing nature, He is also All-Knowing. He knows better which direction should be chosen for the Qiblah. All of His acts are based on Wisdom and Expediency. You have no right to raise objections against His decisions. On the other hand, it is your duty to obey His Commands, and submit to His will.

#### WHEN ARE THE HEARTS SEALED?

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝ خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ۝

"As to those who reject Faith, it is the same to them whether thou warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe. Allah hath set a seal on their hearts, and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty they (incur)" (ii. 6-7).

This is a famous verse of the Holy Qur'an and most people find it difficult to understand it due to lack of discernment and deliberation. Reference here is to the Jews who deliberately shut their eyes against realities. They knew all the signs which the Torah contained in regard to the advent of the Last Prophet. In spite of this, they were not prepared to ponder over those signs and arguments, and it is the law of God that He locks the hearts of those people who do not exercise their reasoning. They have ears, but do not hear, they have eyes but do not see.



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The Divine words, "whether thou warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe," do not mean that it is the will of God that they disbelieve. The knowledge of God is one thing and His pleasure is another. The two are completely different. For example, we may cite the case of a doctor who predicts about a tuberculosis patient that he cannot survive his illness. This does not mean that the doctor actually wills that the patient should not survive. He has just informed us in accordance with his expert knowledge. His own desire or pleasure is not involved in this case.

This verse teaches us that we should always exercise our reason which is a gift of God. The doors of the heart should not be closed in the matter of gaining or seeking an understanding of things. Otherwise, there is a danger that God may gradually withdraw the power and potentiality to accept that which is true and right.

### MESSAGE OF THE QUR'AN

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ  
وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

"O ye people! adore your Guardian-Lord, Who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness" (ii. 21).

This brief verse of the Holy Qur'an contains many indications which invite us to think. Attention should first of all be paid to its mode of address. The Qur'an does not say: "O people of Arabia!" but addresses itself to all human beings. This shows that the message of the Qur'an is meant for the entire world and for entire mankind, without distinction of Persian or Arabian, Eastern or Western. The Qur'an was not revealed only for those who lived at the time of its revelation. It has been revealed also for the succeeding generations till the end of time.

Another matter which invites consideration is that the Qur'anic invitation is based on pure monotheism. It says: "O ye people! adore your Guardian-Lord," as if monotheism is the foundation on which



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the entire edifice of life should be raised. If this foundation-stone is defective, the whole edifice will be defective. This is the reason why all the Prophets, up to the Last Prophet, Muhammad, invited the people first of all to have faith in monotheism, and the Qur'an went to the extent of declaring that all sins can be forgiven, but the sin of polytheism is unforgivable, because polytheism shakes the very foundation of life.

A third important aspect of this verse is that it does not invite us merely to have faith in God or merely to believe in Him, but says that it is equally necessary to worship Him. Worship of God is not just a matter of observing a few rites. It denotes a particular way of living so that one could lead a life in accordance with the will of God. It is not enough to worship Him in the mosque alone. He should be worshipped and obeyed even outside the mosque. One should obey Him at home, and in the market too His dictates should be carried out. One should seek guidance from His teachings in one's individual affairs, and, in the collective affairs of life also, His teachings should be followed. This is the message of the Qur'an to mankind. This is also the message of monotheism, the message of worship, the message which guarantees our success in this word and the Hereafter.

## SUPERIORITY OF KNOWLEDGE

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ  
فَقَالَ أَتَدْعُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ۝

"And He taught Adam the nature of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: 'Tell me the nature of these if ye are right'" (ii. 31).

The context of this verse indicates that when God created the first man, Adam, and bestowed on him His vicegerency, the angels were greatly surprised. They could not understand the reason for another creation by their own side. To remove their surprise and establish the superiority of man over the angels, God caused an intellectual debate to take place. The verse quoted above refers to this debate.

God said: We have taught Adam the names of those things which under the vicegerency of man will come under his sway. He said to the angels: If you think that you hold superiority over man, tell Me the names of all those things. The angels found themselves helpless in the matter. Thus the superiority of man was clearly established.

This also shows the high place which knowledge



occupies in the scheme of things under Islam. According to Islam, this is a privilege which makes man superior to the angels who were created out of light.

For this very reason, the teacher of mankind, Prophet Muhammad, has given so much importance to knowledge. One can hardly forget one's indebtedness to the Prophet of Islam when the first revelation that came to him from God commanded him "to read". His love of knowledge was so great that, although he was the embodiment of all the available knowledge, he never ceased praying to God : "Lord ! increase my knowledge." On no other nation has, therefore, the acquisition of knowledge been made binding as on Muslims. The knowledge of Europe is the product of the last one and a half or two centuries. The books written in Arabic since the advent of the Holy Prophet up to the eighteenth century of the Christian era exceed the total number of books written in all the languages. When Spain was ruled by the Muslims, the list of books of its official library ran into forty-four volumes.

It is because of this verse that we come to know that man's superiority consists in his knowledge. This is the quality which raises him above the level of angels. Therefore, it is the duty of the Muslims to dedicate themselves to the acquisition of knowledge.

## PRAYER AND PATIENCE

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا  
عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ ۝ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْقَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ  
وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ۝

"Nay, seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance and prayer: it is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit,—who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord, and that they are to return to Him" (ii. 45-46).

It is not a child's play to follow the path of faith. Many hardships are involved in it. To declare oneself a Muslim is to accept many restrictions and to invite many hardships. In the words of Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar :

"This is to court martyrdom in the path of love, People think that it is easy to be a Muslim."

Iqbal says the same thing in the following words :

"I shiver when I say that I am a Muslim,  
For I know the hardships to be faced by one  
who says ! there is no god, but God."

The Qur'an says that in this situation, when at every step you need some support, you should seek help from prayer and patience, because this shields



you from every tribulation and keeps you above every trial. As for the question, how should the virtues of patience and prayer be developed, two things ought to be remembered, according to the Qur'an. Firstly, your labour will not go waste. You will receive your reward from your Lord. Secondly, if you do not develop this habit, you should remember that you will have to present yourself one day before your Lord when you will be taken to task for not habituating yourself to patience and prayer.

Modern psychology is of the view that acts are motivated either by persuasion or fear of consequences. In these verses the Qur'an has used persuasion by giving the glad tidings of a rich reward. It has equally used the other motivating force, namely, fear, by telling the believers that they will be taken to task. This mode of address which is in accordance with modern psychology does not result in any benefit to God and His Prophet. The benefit is solely ours. Is there anyone who can make an estimate of the unbounded mercy of God!

## MARTYRS ARE ALIVE

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتٌ مُبِينٌ  
أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ۝

"And say not of those who are slain in the Way of Allah: 'They are dead.' Nay, they are living, though ye perceive (it) not." (ii. 154).

*Jihad* (Holy War) is the highest form of worship in Islam. There are many kinds of *Jihad* (warfare). It can be waged by pen, by property and time and also by tongue. But the highest form of *Jihad* consists in giving away one's life in the way of God.

Because of the high place occupied by martyrdom, a martyr enjoys a distinguished position among the dead. His body is not enclosed in the traditional shroud of the dead, rather he is buried in the same clothes in which he is killed and which are besmeared with blood. Moreover, he is not given any bath; because of martyrdom he is now cleanliness personified. The Qur'an goes a step further and says that you should not use the word "die" or "dead" for the martyrs because they are alive; only the living do not realise the kind of life the martyr lives. So what is this kind of life after



martyrdom. The Holy Qur'an has not given any details. But it is clear that this life is far more superior and vigorous than our present life. According to the Qur'an, the martyrs receive ample provision in a regular manner and they are so richly rewarded that they desire to return to the world more than once and suffer martyrdom time and again.

This aspect of the martyr's life cannot be understood by us in this world. And yet their life has another aspect. As soon as they sacrifice themselves at the altar of the true faith, their relationship with the collective life of the community becomes unbreakable. Their memory and their sacrifice are ever present in the atmosphere like air and light and their footprints cannot be effaced by any power in this world.

This high place of martyrdom was occupied by Husain, the grandson of the Holy Prophet. To all appearances, it was Yazid who achieved victory. But those gifted with deeper understanding know that Yazid has perished for ever, but Husain and his associates are living to this day. Our poet Iqbal has made a point out of it, saying :

"Truth is alive because of the prowess of Shabbir,  
Falsehood is after all a scar of miserable death."

## PHILOSOPHY OF FASTING

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ  
عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ۝

"O ye who believe ! fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint" (ii. 183).

*Saum* in Arabic means to abstain from something. A horse which keeps itself away from walking or eating grass is called *sa'im* in Arabic. In the same way the noon-time is called *saum* because the idea is that at noon-time the sun stops moving in the sky. Fasting is called *saum* because one who fasts abstains from eating and drinking.

God said : "O ye who believe ! fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you." The Qur'anic claim that fasting was prescribed also for those communities which have passed away was made at a time when there were no means of communication, no libraries, no universities or colleges, but its truth has been vindicated by researchers in the subsequent centuries. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Vol. II, p. 106) says that the custom of fasting is found in all religions and nations.



In prescribing fasting for the Muslims like the people before them, the Qur'an has made it clear that the object of fasting is to create piety among the Muslims. What does *Taqwa* or piety mean? The best explanation to this term has been offered by a Companion of the Holy Prophet. Asked by someone as to what piety was, he replied: "Have you ever passed through a narrow path on both sides of which there are thorny bushes?" He said: "Yes." The Companion asked him as to what he did at such a time. The man replied: "I gather together my clothes so that they may not get entangled in the bushes." The Companion said: "This is *Taqwa* (piety)." If we consider the matter seriously, we would realise that this is a good simile for our present life. The path of our life is surrounded on both sides with thorny bushes of desires. If we do not walk warily, there is a danger lest the clothes of our life may be torn. Fasting teaches us to walk warily, to discipline our inner life, and it reminds us of our accountability in the next life.

## RULES OF FASTING

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى  
سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ  
طَعَامُ مَسْكِينٍ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَنْ  
تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ٥

"(Fasting) for a fixed number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later. For those who can do it (with hardship) is a ransom, the feeding of one that is indigent. But he that will give more, of his own free-will,—it is better for him. And it is better for you that ye fast, if ye only knew" (ii. 184).

From the previous verse, the discourse is about fasting. At first, the philosophy of fasting was explained, namely, that it is meant to create piety. In the same context some details regarding the fasting regulations have been given, as to what a person should do if he is sick or on journey or in case he is totally incapacitated to keep fast.

For the sick or for those who are on journey, it is laid down that such persons may give up fasting



### *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*

during the period of sickness or journey but may make up the loss on other days. What is meant by sickness? The Qur'an has not defined it, but it has been made clear that sickness should be of a type which opens up the possibility that it may turn serious in case fasting is undertaken. Ordinary indisposition or ordinary cold should not lead a person to give up fasting.

The same is true of a journey. There is a difference of opinion as to the exact extent of the journey. Some religious leaders hold that it is permissible not to fast even in a journey lasting one day. But Hanafi jurisprudence lays it down that a journey should last at least for three days. In a journey of lesser duration, fasting should be undertaken.

Afterwards, it was laid down that if a person cannot bear to fast, he should feed some poor person with the same food which he is accustomed to take. In this verse the term *Yuteequnahu* has been used. Experts of the Arabic language say that there are two terms, *Taqat* (power) and *Wus'at* (capacity). If it is said that this work is beyond a man's *wus'at* (capacity), it would mean that it is totally impossible for him to do it. But if it is said that a certain work is beyond a man's *Taqat* (power), it would mean that he can do it, but it would entail great hardship for him. In the term *Yuteequnahu*, the same indication is given, namely, that old men

### *Rules of Fasting*

and women or pregnant women or women suckling their children can give up fasting, if it is unbearable for them, provided they feed some poor person.



## FASTING IS MEANT TO CREATE EASE, NOT HARDSHIP

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ  
وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَذَا  
وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ○

“Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him. In that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful” (ii. 185).

Fasting was prescribed even for those communities which have passed away. The virtuous among them showered themselves with the blessings of this worship. But it would not detract from their piety if it is said that the mode of fasting prescribed for the past communities before Islam in order to teach them to control their desires was comparatively a hard discipline. This mode of fasting was full of many restrictions. The reason was that mankind was passing through its childhood and in childhood more than normal restrictions are placed on human beings. Before Islam, people used to commit excesses

## *Fasting is Meant to Create Ease, Not Hardship*

in worship. Some worshippers stretched their hands towards the heavens and stood in this condition until their arms were benumbed and the birds built their nests on them. Some people prostrated for so long that they passed their whole life in prostration. If they undertook fasting, their bodies became as thin as a thorn. The advent of Islam marked the maturity of humanity. It was a sign that mankind has reached its adulthood. Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar has well said:

“When the world reached its youth,  
The last system of life was bestowed upon it.”

One of the gifts which mankind received on reaching its adulthood was that Islam brought balance and moderation in the forms of worship as in other walks of life. This balance and moderation is beautifully illustrated in fasting. The Holy Qur'an clearly told its followers that, by prescribing fasting, God does not want you to involve in hardship. The law which He has revealed aims at creating facilities for human beings. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet insisted on his followers to have the early morning meals before beginning to fast. He also prohibited his followers from fasting without taking meals. Concessions were made for the sick, the travellers and for the aged and decrepit. Every effort was made that the normal work of the day should not suffer due to fasting, and nobody should



trot out the excuse of doing constructive work because he was fasting. The Holy Qur'an says that you should glorify God for having bestowed upon you a religion of such balance and moderation and you should try to thank Him at every step in your life.

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PATIENCE AND THANKFULNESS

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ۝  
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ۝

"Then do ye remember Me; I will remember you Be grateful to Me, and reject not Faith. O ye who believe! seek help with patient Perseverance and Prayer: for Allah is with those who patiently persevere" (ii. 152-153).

There is a message of patience and thankfulness as well as remembrance and worship in these two verses for a person when he becomes helpless and finds no way out. At such a time he is told to be patient. But according to the Holy Qur'an as well as the Arabic language, this is not the true meaning of patience. The real meaning of patience is to remain steadfast, to control oneself. For the same reason *as-sabeer* coming from the root *sabr* (patience) is used for that piece of cloud which remains fixed at some place for a long time. Similarly, *al-sabeera* is used among the Arabs for that herd which goes out to graze in the morning and comes home safely



in the evening.

Another word used by the Holy Qur'an is *shukr* (thanks). Generally, in our society, this word is understood to mean that when you receive some favour from God you should utter His praise saying *Al-Hamdu Lillah* (praise be to God). Of course, *shukr* (thanks) also includes this meaning. But it is more than this. It has a very wide meaning. Its real sense is that the favours received from God should be used in the way God wants them to be used and according to His instructions. This is the reason why the word *kufr* (rejection) has been used in the same verse by way of contrast. *Kufr* means rejection or ingratitude. God says that you should use the favours of God in the right manner. If you use them in the wrong manner, this is rejection of God and breeds His ingratitude.

There is another lesson provided in these verses. When a person finds himself hard pressed or becomes involved in a trial, he should not lose heart. Rather he should seek help from the remembrance of God and offer prayer. If a man bows down before God, he gains peace of mind and becomes filled up with the conviction that he is not alone; rather God is with him. And of course, when God is with someone, no power on earth can prove harmful to him by adding something to his distress.

## PHILOSOPHY OF PRAYER

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ  
دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا  
بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ۝

"When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me: let them also, with a will, listen to My call, and believe in Me: that they may walk in the right way" (ii. 186).

The central theme of this verse is prayer. It is a peculiar style of the Holy Qur'an that when it speaks of the greatness of God or His sovereignty or His wrath, it uses the plural form for God. This is the royal way of speech and the monarchs talk in this way. But where the Holy Qur'an speaks of the mercy or grace of God, it uses the singular form. In this verse all the words used by God for Himself are singular. This shows that God is particularly merciful to His creatures. Man prays to God in fulfilment of his own needs, but God treats it as one of the noblest form of prayer. It is His kindness that He removes all veils between Himself and His creatures. He says that He is nearer to you than your



life-vein. Whatever you have to ask for, ask it directly from Him.

From the Traditions of the Holy Prophet, it seems that when a man prays to God, he is given one of the three things by God. Either his prayer is answered immediately or it is stored up for the Hereafter or, due to his prayer, some imminent trouble is removed from him, which might otherwise have befallen him.

For example, if you ask a most generous person for something repeatedly, he will become disgusted with you. But the case is different with God. Ask Him and ask Him repeatedly, He will still be pleased with you. But if you give up asking Him for His favours, He will be displeased with you. In this world it is a matter of disgrace to stretch out your hand before another person to ask something of him, but ask something of God and you will not be disgraced but get more respect and honour from Him.

SPENDING WEALTH IN THE WAY OF GOD

وَالْفَقْرَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى  
التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ۝

“And spend of your substance in the Cause of Allah, and make not your own hands contribute to (your destruction); but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good” (ii. 195).

This verse was revealed in the context of *Jihad* or the holy war. When, after years of persecution, the Companions of the Holy Prophet were permitted to draw their swords against the non-believers, the Holy Qur'an told them that in *Jihad* (holy war) it is not enough merely to sacrifice one's life. Sometimes sacrifice of wealth and property is also needed. Do not be stingy on this occasion. Spend wholeheartedly for helping the warriors.

But a condition was attached, namely, that wealth should be spent only in the way of God and for the pleasure of God. The object should not be to win the praises of one's fellowmen or to display one's riches and generosity. The standard laid down by Islam in this regard is that acts are judged by their intentions. God does not see how much or what



### *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*

you give in His cause. What He sees is your motive and intention. In other words, God does not attach value to quantity but to quality.

It was also explained that if you desist from spending your wealth on this occasion for keeping the banner of Islam aloft, the result will be that the hands of the enemy will be strengthened, your collective power will be undermined and every individual in the community will risk ruin and perdition.

The gist of this verse is that Islam is not opposed to earning wealth. On the other hand, earning money by lawful means is a duty laid down by Islam. However, it dislikes and condemns the tendency to exalt the acquisition of wealth as the supreme and exclusive object of life and to sacrifice the requirements of the Islamic community at the altar of wealth whenever there is a conflict between the needs of the community and one's own individual needs.

### RESTRICTIVE CUSTOMS

وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَلَكِنَّ  
الْبِرَّ مِنَ اتَّقَى وَأَتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا  
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ○

"It is no virtue if ye enter your houses from the back: it is virtue if ye fear Allah. Enter houses through the proper doors: and fear Allah: that ye may prosper" (ii. 189).

. Before the advent of Islam, the concept of virtue had been badly perverted. For earning the pleasure of God, it was considered necessary to undergo hard troubles and to follow artificial customs instead of living a life of natural simplicity. Even in worship artificial customs and restrictions had been incorporated.

Pilgrimage to the Ka'bah is a supreme form of worship and a reminder of the great sacrifice made by Abraham. Before the advent of the Prophet, the idolaters also used to perform the pilgrimage. But some vicious customs had crept into this form of prayer also. Among them one was that when a man put on the special clothes for performing the



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pilgrimage, he would not enter his house by the main gate. On the other hand, he came to the back of his house and entered the house by climbing the wall. It was considered a sin to enter the house by the gate. Climbing the wall was considered a virtue. In this verse the Holy Qur'an tries to correct this wrong notion by saying that it is not virtue that you enter your houses by the back thereof. The real virtue consists in the fear of God and in living a life on the conviction that one has to account for one's deeds after death. The Holy Qur'an says that you should enter your houses by their gates instead of following wrong customs and you should cultivate the fear of God, which is the source of all virtues.

This verse teaches us the lesson that Islam has come to put down wrong customs. Therefore, it considers that artificial additions to the faith are unnecessary innovations. It is our duty to fight against wrong customs and, instead, propagate the right concept of virtue in our society.

A COMPREHENSIVE SUPPLICATION

فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنُ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُ  
فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ لَمَن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا  
آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا  
عَذَابَ النَّارِ ۚ

"There are men who say: Our Lord! give us (Thy bounties) in this world! But they will have no portion in the Hereafter. And there are men who say: Our Lord! give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and defend us from the torment of the Fire" (ii. 200-201).

In these verses, the Holy Qur'an points two mentalities. There is one mentality which seeks this world alone. It has no faith in the Hereafter or, if it has faith, that is so weak that it never thinks of the future life, the life of eternity. When such a person prays or aspires for something in his heart, he desires only that his present life should be one of ease and comfort and whatever he has to receive, he should receive in this world.

The other mentality is that of the believers. They neither overlook this world, nor forget the next. What they seek is balanced and moderate and their



prayer is comprehensive. They do not believe in monasticism. So they never treat this world as if it were something impure. They neither flee from this world, nor are they so short-sighted as to be ready to face the loss of the other-worldly bliss in their search for the advantages of this world. Their prayer is: "Our Lord! give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter." *Hasanah* in Arabic is a term which includes all the good things. The meaning of the prayer is: Give us that wealth, those children and those fruits which lead to goodness and give us good in the Hereafter also and the good of the Hereafter is none else but pleasure of God.

According to the Traditions, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) often uttered this prayer. If considered seriously, this prayer in itself stands unparalleled and unexampled, because it is inclusive of the good of both the worlds.

## RIGHT OF RULERSHIP

قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً  
فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَنْ  
يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝

"He said: Allah hath chosen him above you, and hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess: Allah granteth His authority to whom He pleaseth. Allah careth for all, and He knoweth all things" (ii. 247).

This part of the Qur'anic verse should be studied against a long historical context. Three thousand years ago, sometime before the reign of David, the Israelites were suffering defeat after defeat at the hands of the Philistines in Syria. The Prophet Samuel had grown old. The Israelites requested him to appoint a king and ruler over them under whose leadership they could prosecute the war against the enemy. The Prophet Samuel, therefore, appointed Saul to rule over them. But the Israelites were angry at this and criticised him. They said: How can Saul be appointed to rule over us when he does not come from a wealthy family, nor does he enjoy nobility of birth and family? The reply given by the Prophet



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Samuel has been stated by the Holy Qur'an in the above verse. The reply is brief but comprehensive, and it sheds light on the qualifications of a ruler. The Prophet Samuel said to the Israelites: Your objection is groundless. Rulership does not depend on wealth and noble birth. It requires two qualifications which Saul possesses in high degree. Firstly, he possesses all the existing knowledge; secondly, in health and physical strength he is superior to you.

The reply shows that whether it is an individual or a nation, the acquisition of power and authority is subject to a Divine law. In this law, no favour is shown to anyone and the leadership and authority according to this law go to that person or nation which is well versed in modern sciences and is physically strong. Therefore, it is our duty, as Muslims, to surpass other nations in the knowledge of modern sciences and in material strength. This is perfectly in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

## GOOD AND EVIL

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَا أُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ۝ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ  
مِنْهُمْ الْمَخْلَصِينَ ۝

“(Iblis) said: ‘Then, by Thy Power, I will put them all in wrong,—except Thy Servants amongst them, sincere and purified (by Thy grace)’” (xxxviii. 82-83).

The story of Adam and Iblis (Devil) is a very old one. But it provides us with lessons of insight and wisdom which will be of benefit to us till the end of time. God bestowed His vicegerency upon the first man on account of the latter's knowledge. But Iblis grew jealous and became insolent. He said: I am created out of fire. Man is created out of clay. I am, therefore, superior, to him. How can I bow down before him? God did not like this jealousy and insolence. Iblis fell from grace. But after suffering disgrace, he became the embodiment of evil and said: I will avenge myself upon man. I will mislead him, by Thy Might, excepting Thy sincere servants. I will set a trap for all of them. God gave Iblis a free hand till the end of time. Thus man was put on a trial for a limitless period. The fact is that all the works of



God are based on wisdom and expediency which man can hardly comprehend. But if we ponder over the nature of the universe, we can immediately understand that the existence of Iblis is no less than a mercy for mankind. It is a popular saying that everything is known by its opposite? If there is no impurity, how can we discern purity? If there is no darkness, no one would attach any value to light. Heat and cold, light and darkness, life and death, these are opposites which are woven into the web of life. If there is no enemy, you can hardly recognise your friend. If there is no evil, the good will become lifeless. By causing man to face Iblis God provides man with the opportunity to awaken his dormant faculties. It is our task now to recognise our enemy, overcome his guiles and establish our right to the vicegerency of God on this earth.

NO COMPULSION IN RELIGION

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمَرْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٥٦

"Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things" (ii. 256).

This verse is a continuation of the previous discourse on *Jihad* (holy war). It has been pointed out here that it is not the object of the Holy War to force people to become Muslims. The object of the Holy War is only to suppress disorder. As for the acceptance of the faith of Islam, it is a matter of one's beliefs, and beliefs pertain to the mind of man. Force can be applied to bodies but not to minds.

Moreover, force is applied by that school of thought of which the arguments rest on shaky foundations. As for Islam, all its teachings are clear. The Holy Qur'an has drawn a clear line of distinction between that which is right and that which is erroneous, between truth and falsehood, between light



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and darkness. So every man possessed of common sense cannot but accept the invitation to Islam.

Another aspect of the matter is that God and His Prophet as well as His *Shari'ah* (Law) would have resorted to the application of force, if any of them stood to benefit personally from such an act. The Holy Qur'an says that whoever rejects the *Taghut* (false deities) (and according to Imam Raghīb *Taghut* is the name of every other deity except God) and believes in God personally benefits from this, because he gets a strong support which is unbreakable and with whose help a man can overcome his difficulties in this life and gain the success of the Hereafter. When, therefore, the creatures of God stand to benefit by the acceptance of Islam, God has no need to resort to force for their conversion to Islam.

The gist of the matter is that there is no compulsion in religion. It depends purely on one's sweet will whether or not one accepts Islam. An Islamic state will not force people of other religions to accept Islam. If the Islamic state had applied force, the majority of the inhabitants of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent would not have been Hindus or otherwise because this subcontinent has been under the sway of the Muslims for many centuries.

### THE DEVIL'S WHISPERINGS

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ  
وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلًا وَاللَّهُ  
وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

"The Evil One threatens you with poverty and bids you to conduct unseemly. Allah promiseth you His forgiveness and bounties. And Allah careth for all and He knoweth all things" (ii. 268).

In the verses prior to the above, the believers were exhorted to spend their wealth in the way of Allah. Generally, when people have to spend their wealth in the way of Allah, for the sake of their country or community or to help their indigent brethren, they begin to think that if they spend their wealth in this way, they themselves would become indigent. The Holy Qur'an says that this idea is a whispering of the devil. It says that whenever you have to spend your wealth for the sake of God, the devil threatens you with destitution and enjoins on you *Fuhasha* (lewdness). *Fuhasha* in Arabic denotes all bad things and qualities. But this term is particularly used for the spiritual disease of miserliness. The famous Arabic



dictionary, *Qamus*, says : *Al-Fahish* means *al-Bakhil* (miser) Thus Satan enjoins *Fuhasha*, which means that you become miserly, although this is a devilish trait.

Thereafter the Holy Qur'an says that the devil calls you towards miserliness, and threatens you with destitution. God, for Whose sake you spend your wealth, promises you, on the contrary two favours. First, that He will favour you with forgiveness in the Hereafter and, secondly, if you spend your wealth for His pleasure, He will bless you with bounties in this world. Your wealth will not decrease. Rather it will increase and you will gain respect and elevation even in this life.

Remember, He is all-embracing and only He can favour you with countless bounties. He is also All-Knowing. He knows your intentions. He will recompense you according to your intention.

Now it is up to you either to give weight to the whisperings of the devil about miserliness or reap benefits by the promises of forgiveness and bounty by your Lord.

## TALK NOT OF FAVOURS SHOWN

الَّذِينَ يَنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
ثُمَّ لَا يَتَّبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلَا أَذًى لَا لَهُمْ  
أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝

"Those who spend their substance in the cause of Allah, and follow not up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury, for them their reward is with their Lord : on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (ii. 262).

To spend one's wealth in the way of Allah without trying to establish one's reputation for generosity and without the desire of display is a highly meritorious and approved act in Islam. The Holy Qur'an has stressed more than once that the believers should cultivate this habit as much as they can. In this verse also God has persuaded the believers to spend their wealth for the cause of Allah and it has been pointed out that a man can expect Divine reward for spending his wealth in the way of Allah provided he always keeps two things before his mind. Firstly, he who spends his wealth on



somebody should never talk of his generosity or of the favour shown to the latter. If he has helped anybody, he should not expect the latter to be thankful to him. He should not raise in his mind the feeling that he is his benefactor. Secondly, he should not inflict any injury upon the person whom he has helped. To talk of one's generosity or to hold in contempt the man whom one has helped either by verbal expression or through his attitude or conduct towards him, all these are forms of injury. Some religious leaders have gone so far as to emphasise that if you feel that the person whom you have helped expresses his gratitude in the act of saluting you, you should prefer a secluded life so that he feels no burden in welcoming you.

KNOWLEDGE IS WISDOM

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ  
فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا  
أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ۝

"He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth ; and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed an abundant good ; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding" (ii. 269).

In this verse, wisdom means knowledge which is advantageous, that is, knowledge is advantageous both to the individual and to the community. *Tafsir-i-Mazhari* also puts it in the same way. The meaning of the verse is that knowledge and wisdom are the special gifts of God and no society or community has a monopoly of them. He can give this blessing to anyone He likes and he who is given this blessing should take it that he has received abundant good. In the Arabic grammar *Khairan Kathiran* (abundant good) is a common noun which denotes greatness. This means that wisdom is such a great gift and such a high virtue that its greatness cannot be encompassed. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) has said the same thing by telling his



followers that when God wants to confer some good on a believer, He grants him understanding of the faith.

The value attached to the search for knowledge by the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet is amply reflected in this verse. The Holy Qur'an and the bearer of the Holy Qur'an have conferred a great blessing on mankind by bringing the first revelation which was to the effect; "Read in the name of thy Lord." The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was an embodiment of knowledge but, till the last breath of his life, he prayed to God: "Lord! increase my knowledge." After a man dies, the chapter of his actions is closed, but the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) said that advantageous knowledge brings good to the learned man even after his death. This advantageous knowledge has been termed "abundant good" by the Holy Qur'an.

Now it is up to us that we dedicate ourselves to the acquisition of this abundant good.

PROPERTY OF THE SURVIVORS

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا  
وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ  
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُعْزَنُونَ

"Those who (in arity) spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public, have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (ii. 274).

After belief (in God and the Prophets), prayer and payment of poor-tax are the fundamentals of Islam. The spirit of prayer consists in respecting the rights of God. The spirit of Zakat (poor-tax) consists in cultivating the spirit of generosity. Zakat (poor-tax) is not paid by one who is miserly, while a generous man feels comfort and pleasure in paying the poor-tax. If the Holy Qur'an is studied, it will be seen that two words oftenly recur in it. One word is *Infaq*, that is, to spend one's wealth in the way of God and the other word is *Ita* which means to give away in the cause of God. In this verse such persons have been praised who are ever ready, day and night, secretly and openly, to spend their wealth



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in the way of God. Such persons have their reward with their Lord. They will neither fear nor grieve. *Khauf* in Arabic means that state of mind which entertains fear about some future danger, while *Huzn* in Arabic denotes the sorrow one feels for some happening in the past. Those who spend their wealth in the cause of God will neither repent for the wealth they have spent in the past in this world nor shall they have any fear as to their future, thinking of the treatment that may be meted out to them. They will be quite happy in all respects and God will give them a great reward.

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) has dwelt on the importance of generosity in his conversations and emphasised it in more than one way. Once he asked his Companions: Is there anyone among you who holds the property of his survivors dearer than his own property? The Companions said: There is no such person. The Holy Prophet said: Everyone's property is that which he has sent forward and whatever he has left behind is the property of his survivors.

The above Qur'anic verse teaches us that we should not cultivate the love of wealth. On the other hand, we should cultivate the habit of spending our wealth for the cause of God. This will bring elevation in this world and salvation in the Hereafter.

## PERFECTION OF VIRTUE

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ۝

"By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love; and whatever ye give, of a truth, Allah knoweth it well" (iii. 92).

In this verse, virtue in general is not under discussion. Spend anything in the cause of God, its reward is immediately entered into the register of your deeds. Even if you greet a Muslim brother of yours with a smile, Allah will treat it as a *Sadaqah* (charity) and will give you the reward thereof.

Here the highest form of virtue is being referred to. *Al-Birr* in Arabic means absolute virtue or the essence of virtue. According to this verse, the perfection of virtue lies in spending for God's sake that which one loves dearly. This includes knowledge, property and time, as well as respect and position.

According to a tradition, when this verse was revealed, a Companion of the Prophet, Abu Talha, came to him. He was the owner of a precious garden of dates in Medina which the Prophet sometimes



### *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*

visited. He said to the Prophet: This garden is dearer to me than every other property of mine. I present it to you in the way of Allah. The Holy Prophet accepted it for the treasury of the Muslims.

But this does not mean that the garden was treated as a standard for spending wealth in the way of Allah. This was certainly not the case. It happened once that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) appealed for contributions to the Muslims. Some faithful followers brought half of what they possessed, some gave away all of their property. The mosque of the Holy Prophet was filled with gold, silver and corn. In this condition an indigent Muslim came to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) with a few dates in hand and said: "O Prophet of God! having worked hard for the whole day, I have received my wages in the form of these dates. I present the same to you for the sake of Islam."

Those who were present on the occasion observed that the Holy Prophet's face brightened up with happiness. He scattered those dates on the heaps of gold, silver and corn and said: Allah might accept these other things because of these dates.

All this teaches us that spending in the way of God what is most dear to us is conditioned by one's capacity and means. Purity of intention and sincerity is the test for this, not vain display and the desire to secure fame and reputation.

### THE FIRST HOUSE OF GOD

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا  
وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

"The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakka: full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings" (iii. 96).

Ka'bah in this verse has been mentioned as the first house in the world which God has blessed. According to the Qur'an, this is the House of God of which the foundations were raised by Abraham with the help of his son, Ishmael. In the words of the Qur'an:

وَاذْكُرْ رَفْعَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ  
الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ

"And when Abraham and Ismā'il raised the foundations of the House" (ii. 127).

What the Qur'an has stated briefly, the commentators of the Qur'an have elaborated in detail.

For example, the author of the world famous "History of Mecca," al-Razzaqi, says:



### *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*

فلبت ما شاء الله ان يلبث فامرته عز وجل  
ببناء البيت -

"He lived so long as God willed him to live, then God commanded him to build the House."<sup>1</sup>

Tabari uses the same words and says that he lived in Syria so long as God willed him to live. Then God commanded him to build the House of God.<sup>2</sup>

When Abraham received these commands from God, he was in Syria. According to the historian Ibn Sa'd, he was aged a hundred years at that time and Ishmael was thirty years of age. Ibn Sa'd says:

اوحى الله الى ابراهيم ان يبني البيت  
وهو يومئذ ابن مائة سنة - واسماعيل  
يومئذ ابن ثلاثين سنة

"Allah sent a revelation to Abraham that he should build the House of God. At that time he was aged a hundred years and Ishmael was thirty years of age."<sup>3</sup>

Giving more details, al-Razzaqi says:

1. Al-Razzaqi, *Akhbar-i-Makka*, Vol. I, p. 23.

2. Tabari, *Tarikh*, Vol. I, p. 133.

3. Ibn Sa'd, *Tabaqat*, Vol. I, p. 25.

### *The First House of God*

فقاما يحقران من القواعد ونادا ربنا  
تقبل منا انك انت السميع العليم

"Then they stood digging the foundations and they cried out: Our Lord! accept from us. Thou art the Hearer, the Knower."<sup>4</sup>

Al-Razzaqi has, in this connection, related the tradition narrated by the historian Ibn Ishaq, that when Abraham and his son dug out the foundation, the original foundation laid by the first Prophet, Adam, appeared before them and they raised their foundation upon Adam's foundation.

The words are:

فقاما يحقران عن القواعد ليس معهما  
غيرهما فبلغ ابراهيم اساس آدم الاول

"They stood digging out the foundations. There was no one else with them. So Abraham reached the first foundation laid by Adam."<sup>5</sup>

A few details of this brief statement are necessary. According to al-Razzaqi, al-Tabari and Ibn Khaldun, Mecca was the first city on this earth where Adam built his habitat. The first building constructed by him was the building of the Ka'bah.

4. Al-Razzaqi, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 24.

5. Al-Tabari, op. cit., p. 27; Ibn Khaldun, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 155.



The special point which needs stress in the above verse is that the first house for the worship of God is not the preserve of any particular nation. This house is meant for the Arabs as well as for the non-Arabs, for people living in the east as well as for people living in the west, for the blacks as for the whites. Then God said this is a blessed House and a source of guidance for all mankind. This is the fountain of Divine Knowledge which quenches the spiritual thirst of entire humanity. This is the place where the Muslims gather annually and return home after finding a solution to their material and spiritual problems. This is the centre of which circumambulation is a duty laid down upon every believer who has the necessary means.

Every man who treats this sacred House as a *qiblah* (direction of prayer) should thank God for this blessing bestowed upon him. The fact is that we stand guard over this House and this House stands guard over us both in this world and in the Hereafter.

## SURPLUS WEALTH

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ ۚ قُلِ الْغَفْوٰ

"They ask thee how much they are to spend ; say: What is beyond your needs" (ii. 219).

This is a famous verse of the Holy Qur'an. In this verse a fundamental teaching has been laid down, which, if practised in right earnest, will lead to the establishment of a welfare society. The Companions of the Holy Prophet were always eager to spend their wealth in the way of Allah. They did not want to keep anything for themselves and were anxious to spend every penny for the sake of Islam. After paying Zakat (poor-tax) they often enquired of the Prophet as to how much more they should spend. In this verse a reply has been given to this question. God says: "They ask thee how much they are to spend ; say: What is beyond your needs." In this way they will not straiten themselves in their desire to spend their wealth for the sake of Allah and, after meeting their legitimate needs, they can serve the country and the community by spending their surplus wealth.



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This teaching of the Qur'an came at a time when administrative machinery and economic institutions were not developed beyond a primitive stage. The government had no machinery whereby it could set up welfare institutions on a collective level. Therefore, the Qur'an left this matter to the discretion of the individuals, after they had paid the compulsory levy Zakat (poor-tax). This is the reason why the Qur'an insists on feeding the poor, relieving the indigent and helping the orphans. Today when the machinery of government is developed to an extent that it touches every aspect of man's life and collective welfare has become the responsibility of the state, it has become all the more necessary that surplus wealth, which circulates only among a few well-to-do people, should be concentrated in one place and spent for the relief of poverty under regular planning. If this becomes the order of the day, the class-struggle which disturbs the peace of mankind in every sphere of life will come to an end, and, in the words of Iqbal, the hope can be entertained that:

"That reality which is hidden in the words  
(of the Qur'an) 'say: all that you can spare'  
will become manifest in these days."

## REQUIREMENT OF PIETY

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ  
وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

"O ye who believe! fear Allah as He should be feared, and die not except in a state of Islam" (iii. 102).

This is the gist and essence of all the teachings and directions of the Qur'an. According to some other verses, this is the will which all the Prophets left behind for their children and relations. A commentator of the Qur'an says: If I am asked to select a verse from the whole of the Qur'an, I shall select this verse.

In this verse, the command has been given that when death comes upon you, it should find you in a state of piety and, since the time of death is not fixed, you should pass every moment of your life in a state of piety. No one knows when death will come to him. *Taqwa* (piety) in Arabic means to be on one's guard and to ward off (evil). But in the terminology of the Qur'an, *Taqwa* (piety) denotes a state of mind in which a man loves virtue and



This teaching of the Qur'an came at a time when administrative machinery and economic institutions were not developed beyond a primitive stage. The government had no machinery whereby it could set up welfare institutions on a collective level. Therefore, the Qur'an left this matter to the discretion of the individuals, after they had paid the compulsory levy Zakat (poor-tax). This is the reason why the Qur'an insists on feeding the poor, relieving the indigent and helping the orphans. Today when the machinery of government is developed to an extent that it touches every aspect of man's life and collective welfare has become the responsibility of the state, it has become all the more necessary that surplus wealth, which circulates only among a few well-to-do people, should be concentrated in one place and spent for the relief of poverty under regular planning. If this becomes the order of the day, the class-struggle which disturbs the peace of mankind in every sphere of life will come to an end, and, in the words of Iqbal, the hope can be entertained that:

“That reality which is hidden in the words  
(of the Qur'an) ‘say: all that you can spare’  
will become manifest in these days.”

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hates evil and tries to avoid not only major but also minor sins. In the words of Ibn Qayyim, a pious man does not see how small and inconsequential is the sin he commits; what he sees is that He Who is being disobeyed is great. An Arab poet has explained piety in a most excellent manner. He says:

“Ward off sins, whether great or small. This is *Taqwa* (piety).

Don't treat minor sins as of no consequence; small pebbles collected together form a mountain.”

## ISLAMIC UNITY

وَاَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوا  
نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ كُنْتُمْ اَعْدَاءً فَالَفَ بَيْنَ  
قُلُوبِكُمْ فَاصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ اِخْوَانًا ۚ

“And hold fast, all together, by the Rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you: for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren” (iii. 103).

Before the advent of Islam, the mutual enmity among the Arabs formed a dark chapter in human history. They quarrelled and fought with each other on small matters. Aws and Khazraj were two famous tribes of Medina. Their ancestors were real brothers from the maternal as well as the paternal side. A quarrel started amongst them and persisted even in their later generations. This enmity continued for about 120 years and, according to historians, the small and great skirmishes between them numbered 1700.

In this verse of the Holy Qur'an, there is a reference to these past events. The verse reminds



the Muslims of the great favour of God Who changed this situation and brought about love and amity between them in place of mutual hatred and enmity. As a result, the enemies of yesterday became the brothers of today. From this Qur'anic teaching we learn that we should avoid a situation where, after this special favour of God, we may again become disunited. God commanded the Muslims to remain united. Emphasis has been laid in this verse on the fact that the unity of the Muslims should be forged on the basis of religion. Again, after saying that you should hold fast by the covenant of Allah, the words "all together" have been added for further stress. These words themselves preach unity. As if this was not sufficient, the Qur'an added, "be not divided". This was done to lay emphasis on unity and to instruct the Muslims to avoid all quarrels and differences.

The gist of the matter is that, according to Islam, unity is the gift of God which constitutes one of His greatest favours. Disunity and disruption is a crime. It is our duty to follow this Qur'anic teaching strictly in our individual as well as collective life at every step.

## THE DISGRACED JEWS

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلَالَةُ أَيْنَ مَا تَقِفُوا إِلَّا لَا يُجِبُ مِنَ  
اللَّهِ وَحَبْلٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَبَاءُ وَبِغَضِبِ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ  
عَلَيْهِمُ الْمُسْكَنَةُ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ  
وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ق

"Shame is pitched over them (like a tent) wherever they are found, except when under a covenant (of protection) from Allah and from men; they draw on themselves wrath from Allah, and pitched over them is (the tent of) destitution. This because they rejected the Signs of Allah, and slew the Prophets in defiance of right; this because they rebelled and transgressed beyond bounds" (iii. 112).

There was a time when the Israelites were the leaders of mankind. God sent many Prophets among them one after another and preferred them to the nations of the world. But this unfortunate nation showed no gratitude for the favours of God. They killed many Prophets and held in contempt the law that they brought with them until the law of retaliation came into operation and this nation was thrown from the heights of honour and greatness into the



the abyss of humiliation and poverty. In this verse mention has been made of the Divine punishment meted out to the Jews. God says that humiliation has been made to cling to this disobedient and unthankful nation. Wherever they live, they will live in abasement. If anyone seeks an explanation of this part of the verse, he need not go far. He should bring before his mind's eye the fate of the Jews some years ago in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Germany. This will convince him of the truth of the Qur'an. God says the Jews are fated to live in humiliation for ever. But there is one exception, that is, "except when under a covenant (of protection) from Allah and from men". This means that they can live under the protection of some group of men. Temporarily, they can stage a recovery. But this is possible only if there is a covenant with Allah and with those who uphold His law or they seek help from some other powerful nation. But they cannot stand on their own legs, nor can they earn a place for themselves in this world by their own efforts.

Today the Muslims are grieved over the conditions being faced by the Arab world. But they should take heart from the Qur'anic prediction and remain convinced that, if they are united and follow the teachings of Islam, the earth will become narrow for the disgraced Jews.

## AFTER COMMITTING ERROR

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ  
فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ  
وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ۝

"And those who, having done something to be ashamed of, or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring Allah to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins,—and who can forgive sins except Allah?—and are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done" (iii. 135).

In verses previous to this verse mention was made of Paradise. It was said that Paradise is for the pious, the virtuous and the God-fearing who are known for spending their wealth in the way of Allah, for controlling their anger, for pardoning men and for treating even their enemies with kindness. In this verse some other qualities of these people have been mentioned.

In this verse God says that these people are not infallible. They too commit errors and sins. But the difference lies in the fact that when, through neglect, forgetfulness or the dominance of emotions, they commit a sin, they become restless, ask for-



givenness of God and acknowledge their mistake before Him with all the humility at their command. They do not merely ask forgiveness from their tongue. They are not of those who continue to derive enjoyment from their sins while outwardly seeking pardon from God. They know perfectly well that such repentance is worthless, and, in fact, needs further repentance. They always remember the saying of the Holy Prophet that if a man repents at his sin but continues to commit it, he is like a person who mocks at God.

These people repent at their sin immediately if they commit one. They do not persist in it. They always keep in mind the warning of the Holy Prophet that repeated commitment of minor sins turns them into major sins.

The gist of the matter is that sins can be committed even by pious persons. This is but human. The believer is one who, after committing a sin, does not remain neglectful of it. He should ask forgiveness of God. God is Forgiving. He will cleanse him of his sin, as if he had never committed it.

## QUALITIES OF THE BELIEVERS

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظَيْتِ الْغَيْظِ  
وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْحَسَنِينَ ۝

“Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men;—for Allah loves those who do good” (iii. 134).

Pious believers have been characterised with four qualities in this verse. Firstly, they are a group of people who always spend their wealth in the way of Allah, whatever be the conditions with which they are faced. If they are rich and wealthy, they do not desist from spending their wealth due to a life of extravagance and luxury. If they are poor, they do not give up sacrificing their wealth in proportion to their meagre resources, because of their poverty.

Secondly, they control their anger. The point to be attended to is that God does not say about them that they are never angry. What is said is that, if they are angry, they keep their anger under control. In this connection a tradition of the Holy Prophet



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is well worth remembering. He said: The successful wrestler is not one who beats his opponents but one who succeeds in suppressing his anger.

To control one's anger is a negative quality. The Holy Qur'an goes further and describes two developed and positive qualities of piety. It says that they do not merely control their anger, but pardon those who commit excesses against them. Further, they do good even to such people.

It is well known about Imam Zain-ul-Abideen that once a jug of water fell upon him from the hands of a slave-girl who was in charge of arrangements for his ablution. The Imam looked at her with wrathful eyes, whereupon she recited the part of the Qur'anic verse, "And those who restrain their anger." The Imam's anger disappeared. Then she recited the latter part of the verse, "and (they) pardon men". The Imam said: "I have pardoned you." She again recited the last part of the verse. "And Allah loves those who do good (to others)". The Imam said: "Go! I have given you your freedom."

These are some of the qualities of the pious. May God enable us to cultivate these habits and develop these qualities within ourselves!

## STUDY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ۝

"Many were the Ways of Life that have passed away before you: travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth" (iii. 137).

The word *Sunan* used in this verse is the plural of *Sunnah*. *Sunnah* means a way. It is possible that the possessive case may have been omitted and this word may mean "*Ahl-i-Sunan*," that is, people who followed certain ways. It has also been said that *Sunnah* really means *Ummah* (a community). The meaning of the verse is that many communities and the followers of many a way have passed away before you. Travel in the land, see their remains and learn lessons from them. These were a people who boasted that they were the monarchs of all they surveyed, whose power and help were the talk of the day, whose palatial buildings almost touched the skies. But today there is no one to shed tears over them, no one to pray for them and no one to speak well of them. Their lofty buildings are a heap of ruins and their remains



testify to the fact that when a nation invites punishment from God by its insolence and disobedience, no power in the world can save it from the wrath of God. *Seeru* (travel) and *Wanzuru* (see) have not been used in this verse in the sense of a command. But they at least show that, according to the Qur'an, Muslims should take interest in tourism and the study of archaeological remains. But this interest should not be for the sake of enjoyment but for the sake of learning lessons from the history of extinct nations so that we may mould our own lives in the right pattern as enunciated by Islam.

OUTWARD FORM AND REALITY

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ○

“So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: for ye must gain mastery if ye are true in Faith” (iii. 139).

This verse of the Holy Qur'an promises help and victory to the Muslims. *A'laun* is the plural of *A'la* which means that you will have the upper hand. There is only one condition for that and it is that you should become a believer.

What is the meaning of “you become true in faith”? To understand this, two examples should be borne in mind. The outward form of a thing is different from its essential reality. Some people put up a scare-crow to stand guard over their cultivated fields. The outward form of this scare-crow is just like that of a human being. He is clothed like a man. For some time birds and animals too fall under the illusion that it is really a human being. But when gradually this illusion is removed, no one cares for it. Similarly, the skin of a dead lion is stuffed with chaff. It looks just like a living lion.



### *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*

But when children, after a period of fear and diffidence come near him, they discover the truth, after which they begin to kick at it. It is clear that a scare-crow and a stuffed lion are of not much value, unless the scare-crow is a real watchman and a lion is a real lion. In this verse God has promised help and victory to the Muslims on condition that their faith is a real faith and a true faith, not merely in outward form but also in essence. History stands as a witness to the fact that when and wherever the Muslims fulfilled this condition, God gave them success and victory. Even today if the Muslims live up to their faith and fulfil the condition laid down by God, they will certainly be favoured by God with help and victory at every step in the battle of life.

### POSITION OF THE PROPHET

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا  
مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ  
وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن  
قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ۝

"Allah did confer a great favour on the Believers when He sent among them an Apostle from among themselves, rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom, while, before that, they had been in manifest error" (iii. 164).

In this verse the fourfold duties of the Holy Prophet have been explained briefly but comprehensively. First of all, the believers have been reminded of the favour of God that He raised a Prophet from among themselves, that is, from mankind. Although this is a favour to all humanity because the Prophet is a mercy unto all the worlds, yet the believers should be particularly thankful to God Who has sent the Prophet as a mercy unto them.

Then God says that the purpose of sending the



Prophet is, firstly, that he recites the verses of the Qur'an. In other words, he communicates to the believers the messages he receives from God. Thus he occupies the position of a great preacher. His second duty is that he purifies those who follow him and removes from them the spiritual and moral filth which sticks to them. This makes him a great reformer. But his work does not end here. He also carries out the duty of teaching the Qur'an and does not confine himself to mere preaching. He interprets and explains the Qur'an by word and deed. Thus he is a great teacher. Again, he teaches not merely the Book, but also Wisdom. He promulgates the rules and regulations of the Faith. He also unravels the spiritual mysteries of life to an elect few. Thus he occupies the position of a great spiritual guide.

Such is the description of the Holy Prophet given by the Qur'an. He is not just a messenger between God and His servants. He is a great preacher, a great reformer, a great teacher and a great spiritual guide. It is the duty of every Muslim, therefore, to believe in all the four aspects of his prophethood.

DO NOT FORGET DEATH

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّوْنَ أَجُورَكُمْ  
يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ ۖ

"Every soul shall have a taste of death: and only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense" (iii. 185).

This verse of the Holy Qur'an seeks to dispel some wrong notions. Before the advent of Islam, a large part of mankind held the belief that death is a punishment for our sins. The *Jewish Encyclopaedia*<sup>1</sup> incorporates the belief of the modern Jews that death is the punishment of a person's sin; the Christians also hold the same belief. The Bible says that desire breeds sin and, when sins accumulate, they lead to death. Refuting this erroneous view, the Qur'an declared that death has nothing to do with virtue or vice. This is the natural termination of life: whether a man is virtuous or evil-minded, whether he is rich or poor, whether he is a king or a beggar, everyone has to pass through this experience and must taste of death.

1. *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. IV, p. 403.



In the other part of the verse, another misunderstanding has been dispelled. Sometimes in this world cruelty and injustice become prevalent while justice and virtue come to nought. Those who follow the right path are pierced with bullets or sent to the gallows. Believers pass their lives in poverty while disbelievers merry in prosperity. Virtue is met with abuses while evil-doers are garlanded. This sight provokes the question as to why this happens. The Holy Qur'an says that these doubts cross your mind because you take this world as a world where the full consequences of actions reveal themselves. But this is not so. This world is merely a place of trial, a testing ground. The real consequences of actions will reveal themselves before you in the after-life. Just as death is inevitable, the consequences of good and evil are also inevitable. Therefore, do not forget death by immersing yourself in the pleasures of this world. Neither should you forget the Hereafter wherein every person will bear the full consequences of his deeds or misdeeds.

## SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ  
وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ۝

“Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of Night and Day,—there are indeed Signs for men of understanding” (iii. 190).

In the explanation of this verse, two aspects have to be considered: one aspect relates to faith and the other to practice. As far as the aspect of faith is concerned, it ought to be remembered that before the advent of the Holy Prophet, people worshipped innumerable objects. The heavens and the earth and the night and day were also objects of worship. Many nations worshipped them in a regular manner. The Holy Qur'an declared that this belief in the divinity of the heavens and the earth is unfounded. The heavens and the earth have been created by someone. Therefore, instead of worshipping them, it is their Creator who should be worshipped.

From the viewpoint of practice, the Holy Qur'an awakened the dormant reason of man by declaring that he should not stand in awe of the heavens and



the earth or the night and the day. They have been created for man's good; he has not been created for them. Therefore, it is the duty of mankind to study the alternation of the night and the day and the creation of the heavens and the earth and to subjugate the universe. Thus it will find an endless treasure of knowledge and power; it will discover innumerable proofs of Divine Unity and it will gain conviction of the wisdom, power and sovereignty of God.

Science provides justification for this thesis of the Qur'an. If you take up the books of astronomy, you will be wonder struck by the number of stars in the heavens, by the influences exerted by the sun and the moon and by the mutual relationship of these influences, by the rules which govern their rise and setting and by the different modes of their movement. As human reason advances, the endless wonders of the heavens are revealed to man. As far as the earth is concerned, how many scientific inventions have taken place which unravel its mysteries and yet these mysteries seem to be unending. Many sciences like Archaeology Meteorology and Geography study the earth and yet human reason stands aghast before its unsolved mysteries.

This verse teaches us that the promotion of scientific knowledge is one of the objects of the Qur'an. Therefore, it is the duty of the Muslims to acquire expert knowledge of the sciences.

THREE INSTRUCTIONS

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا  
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ○

"O ye who believe! persevere in patience and constancy: vie in such perseverance; strengthen each other; and fear Allah; that ye may prosper" (iii. 200).

This verse of the Holy Qur'an seems to be very brief, but, in its content and meaning, it is very profound. It gives three instructions to believers. The first instruction is that they should develop their power of endurance for undertaking the labour which they have to undergo in obeying the Divine Commands. The trouble which they have to face in performing Hajj, in offering prayers and in fasting as well as in carrying out other obligatory duties should be borne by them willingly.

The second instruction is that the believers should be patient in the face of the adversities brought upon them in fighting the enemies of Islam. God says that you will have to make many sacrifices in facing your enemies. You will have to sacrifice



your life and wealth. You will inflict wounds and wounds will be inflicted on you. Sometimes you will achieve victory, while at other times you will suffer defeat. The believers must accustom themselves to patience and endurance under all these conditions.

The third instruction is that you should always be well prepared in the way of Allah. Whether it is a struggle against your own lower desires or against an enemy, you should in all cases keep yourselves in readiness. The Prophet has dwelt on the excellence of this sort of readiness. He said that keeping watch over the enemy for one night is better than worshipping God for one thousand nights. He also said that Hell-fire will not touch the eyes which weep for the fear of God or which keep awake at night in the path of God. He further declared that the smoke of Hell-fire will not enter the nose of the warrior of faith whose nose becomes dusty on account of the dust raised by his horse's hoofs.

After giving these three instructions, God also told the believers as to how they should develop these qualities. God said: Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him that you may be successful. Fear of God is the fountain-head of all other virtues, and in it lies hidden the secret of your individual as well as collective prosperity.

## RIGHTS OF THE ORPHANS

وَأَتُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَيْرَ  
بِالضَّيِّبِ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَمْوَالِكُمْ ۖ  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا ۝

“To orphans restore their property (when they reach their age), nor substitute (your) worthless things for (their) good ones; and devour not their substance (by mixing it up) with your own. For this is indeed a great sin” (iv. 2).

Before the advent of the Holy Prophet, anarchy was rampant in every sphere of life. The orphans too were faced with unspeakable conditions. With the advent of the Prophet, their condition improved; people began to realise that they too had their rights. Thus the orphans began to breathe freely.

The greatest favour done to the orphans by Islam was that the Holy Prophet himself came into this world as an orphan. His father had died before his birth. After some time his mother also died. His grandfather took him under his care, but he too soon died. He was brought up by his loving uncle. For the orphans and the helpless what greater support



### *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*

could be imagined than that the Holy Prophet, who was being sent into the world as the guardian of the universe, was himself an orphan with no one to help him. When the Prophet took up his mission, he protected the rights of the orphans, and commanded that as soon as they reach the age of puberty, their property should be handed over to them. If the guardians (of the orphans) are well-to-do, they should look after their property until the orphans come of age without charging any remuneration. If the guardians are poor, they should charge remuneration only to the extent to which it is necessary for their maintenance. The Qur'an says that if you devour their property, it is as if you are filling your belly with Hell-fire. The Prophet, who explained the Qur'an, said that those who devour the property of the orphans will be raised from their graves in such a condition that flames of fire will be coming out from their mouths.

On the one hand, this treatment was administered to those who committed excesses with the property of the orphans and legal safeguards were provided for the protection of their property; on the other hand, good tidings were given to those who treated the orphans humanely and kindly, saying that such people will earn the pleasure of God. People were informed that if a man places his hand on the head of an orphan as a mark of kindness, God will reward

### *Rights of the Orphans*

him for every hair of the orphan. The Prophet also said that Paradise is only for those who are soft-hearted and the best way for softening one's heart is to treat the orphans kindly.



## MORAL DISEASE

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا ۚ  
الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ  
وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَأَعْتَدْنَا  
لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ۝

“For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vain-glorious;—(nor) those who are niggardly or enjoin niggardliness on others, or hide the bounties which Allah hath bestowed on them; for We have prepared, for those who resist Faith, a Punishment that steeps them in contempt” (iv. 36-37).

Continuing from the preceding verses, where the Muslims were commanded to do good to their parents, relations, the needy and the orphans, those impediments are now being mentioned which stand in the way of fulfilling these duties. It is said in these verses that there are three kinds of people who do not perform these duties. Firstly, there is the man who is proud. He is always obsessed with his own greatness and thinks it beneath his dignity to attend to others. The other person is one who is boastful. He indulges in self-praise, scorns others and exhibits

*Moral Disease*

his pride at every step. The third person is one who is niggardly. One has to spend something in order to give practical proof of one's kindness to parents, relations, orphans and the needy. But he loves wealth so much that he cannot spend a pie on them. Thus his niggardliness prevents him from performing his duties to others.

God likes not any of these three and since all three kinds of persons are swayed by pride and the niggardly person also loves wealth because he is obsessed with the idea of gaining a high position for himself in society, therefore, God has prepared for them an abasing punishment in the Hereafter, which will utterly disgrace them.

These verses teach us the lesson that proud, boastful and niggardly persons cannot become members of a healthy Muslim society. For them there is a painful punishment in the Hereafter. Therefore, those who want to call themselves Muslims owe it as a duty that they should try their best to protect themselves from these moral and spiritual diseases.



## MOMENT OF REGRET

كَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ  
عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا ۝

“How then if We brought from each People a witness, and We brought thee as a witness against these People!” (iv. 41).

This verse depicts the scene when, in the Hereafter, God will hold His court of justice. God says that on the Day of Resurrection all communities and nations will be brought before Him and He will present to them their Prophets and witnesses in order to prove that His Message has reached them. These Prophets will testify that all of them were invited to accept monotheism and it was made clear to them what is true and what is false.

The Holy Prophet of Islam, because he is the Seal of the Prophets and came last of all, will confirm and support their testimony and bear witness in support of these Prophets. Another explanation is that “these” refers to the Muslim community. The Prophet will bear testimony to the fact that all those people who came into the world after his

*Moment of Regret*

advent till the last day have been instructed in the message of the Qur'an and they have been warned of the punishment in the Hereafter. The Companions of the Prophet stated that whenever the Holy Prophet recited this verse, his sense of responsibility so overwhelmed him that he began to shed tears.

This verse gives us much to ponder about. God forbid that we belong to that unfortunate section of Muslims whose disobedience and sinfulness become evident before the Holy Prophet on the Day of Resurrection.



## THREE KINDS OF JEALOUSY

أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ  
مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ج

“Or do they envy mankind for what Allah hath given them of His bounty?” (iv. 54).

In the previous part of this verse, mention was being made of the Jews. They felt distressed by the fact that prophethood was taken away from their family and vested in the children of Ishmael. They are also grieved by the fact that the Last Prophet appeared in the person of Muhammad. God says that these people are jealous, although it is foolishness to feel jealous of that which is a pure gift of God.

According to the Islamic legal theory, jealousy is of three kinds. Firstly, that a man should desire to obtain for himself the knowledge, wealth or respect which belongs to another person. This is a natural feeling, which is called envy and Islam considers it to be lawful. Secondly, that a man should desire to obtain for himself at the expense of another person that which belongs to him. This is unlawful. The third kind of jealousy is that a man

*Three Kinds of Jealousy*

knows perfectly well that he cannot obtain for himself that which belongs to another. Therefore, he desires that if he cannot obtain it, the other person should also be deprived of it. This is the worst form of jealousy and the Holy Prophet has said about the two latter forms of jealousy that they eat up virtues just as fire eats up dry wood. To understand the attitude of the Qur'an about jealousy, it is well to remember that, according to the Qur'an, the first sin committed in this universe was the result of jealousy. Iblis (the devil) became jealous of Adam because he thought that not Adam but he (the devil) deserved the honour which had been bestowed upon him. The result was that he was turned out of the presence of God.



### ATTACH YOURSELF TO THE HOLY PROPHET

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِي مَا  
شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا  
مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ۝

"But no, by thy Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction" (iv. 65).

This verse was revealed in a particular context. During the days of the Prophet, a Jew and a hypocrite quarrelled between themselves. The case was submitted before the Prophet for decision. The Prophet decided in favour of the Jew. The hypocrite came to a Companion of the Prophet along with the Jew and said that he was not satisfied with the decision of the Prophet. He requested the Companion to decide the case. When the Companion of the Prophet heard this, he said that if a person calls himself a Muslim but still does not accept the decision of the Prophet, his case will be decided by the sword.

### Attach Yourself to the Holy Prophet

Saying this, he slew the hypocrite with his sword. The people of the slain took the case before the Prophet and this verse was revealed on that occasion.

In this verse, it has been made clear that for becoming a Muslim it is not enough that a man should take his disputed cases before the Prophet or in accordance with the *Shari'ah* (laws) of the Prophet for decision. It is also necessary that after the decision has been made, a person should feel completely satisfied with it. It is possible that if the decision is unfavourable, the person may have a feeling of straitness in his heart, but he should have no objection to it intellectually as well as from the point of view of the tenets of Islam.

The legists of Islam have concluded from this verse that if a person is sceptical about a command of the Holy Prophet or refuses to accept it, he puts himself outside the pale of Islam. It may be debated, of course, whether a command has really been given by the Prophet and, if it has been given, what is its real import and meaning. But once it is proved beyond dispute that the Prophet gave the command, there should be no further questioning.



## BEST COMPANY

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ  
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ  
وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا

“All who obey Allah and the Apostle are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of Allah,—of the Prophets (who teach) the Sincere (lovers of Truth), the Witnesses (who testify), and the Righteous (who do good): ah! what a beautiful Fellowship!” (iv. 69).

In the opening chapter of the Qur'an the believers have been taught the prayer 'Guide us along the Straight Path.' But what is the Straight Path? It is "the path of those on whom Thy grace doth light." Who are these people? In the above verse these people have been mentioned, namely, the Prophets, the Truthful, the Faithful and the Righteous. The truthful are those who love truth by nature and who, in testifying to the truth of the Prophets, are not troubled by any doubts. The faithful are those who go to the extent even of sacrificing their lives, in order to provide practical testimony of

## Best Company

their faith in Islam, and the righteous are those who are firmly attached to the *Shari'ah* (law of Islam) in arranging and administering the affairs of their life. The man who obeys God and the Prophet may sometimes come upon moments when he feels alone in this world. But in such moments he should remember that he is not lonely. The Prophets, the truthful, the faithful and the righteous are also among those who follow this path and he is nearing his destination along with all of them.

The second aspect of this verse relates to the life of Paradise. Obedience to God and the Prophet will be rewarded with the eternal bliss of Paradise. Here the believer will have all the material and spiritual comforts. But if he does not get the company of good people, he will feel a sense of deficiency. Therefore, God says that the people of Paradise will have the best company. Here they will enjoy the company of the Prophets, the truthful, the faithful and the righteous who are the flowers of humanity and its crowning glory.



## CIVIL DEFENCE

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا خُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانْفِرُوا  
ثِبَاتٍ أَوْ انفِرُوا جَبِيعًا ۝

“O ye who believe! take your precautions, and either go forth in parties or go forth all together” (iv. 71).

The context of this verse is related to the Battle of Uhud. In this battle, the disbelievers felt greatly encouraged, due to a temporary victory. Medina was surrounded on all sides by the enemy. Not only the Quraish, but also other tribes of Arabia forged unity among themselves to defend their polytheistic faith. In this condition, the believers were asked to take all precautions. *Hizr* in Arabic means “precaution”. The import was that you should be fully prepared. The provision of arms and skill in the arts of warfare are necessary elements in war preparations. God said that you should try every expedient which helps defence. Do not see what nation or community has invented this particular method of war or defence. Whatever method is effective, you should adopt it.

## Civil Defence

The Holy Prophet executed this Divine Command on the occasion of the Battle of the Ditch. For the defence of Medina, he consulted his Companions. Salman, the Persian, one of the eminent Companions, said that, on such occasions, the Persians dug ditches around their cities. “If you deem it expedient, you may also adopt the same method of warfare.” The Prophet approved of his suggestion and commanded that a ditch should be dug. When the ditch was being dug, the Prophet himself joined those who were engaged in digging the ditch. This shows that Islam has no prejudice against any sciences including the science of warfare. The Prophet said: Wisdom is the lost property of a believer; take it wherever you find it. In the light of these teachings of the Qur'an and the *Hadith* (Traditions of the Prophet), it is incumbent that our armies should be trained in the most up-to-date way and should provide themselves with the most modern weapons, while the common people should train themselves in civil defence, so that when the time comes, they may face the enemy effectively and defeat his guiles.



## MEDITATION ON THE QUR'AN

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ  
غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا ۝

“Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy” (iv. 82).

At the time of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and even thereafter, those who denied the Prophethood of Muhammad doubted the Divine origin of the Qur'an. They thought that it was written by Muhammad himself. Even in our own times, many a so-called “enlightened” person labour under the same illusion. In this verse the doubts of these sceptics have been dispelled.

It is a matter of daily observation that if a man makes some small speech, it is not free from unevenness. Some parts of the speech are more eloquent than others. If a man of weak disposition is in a state of anger, his speech becomes broken. Due to mental development, a man's writings and speeches over a number of years show a great deal of dis-

*Meditation on the Qur'an*

crepancy. But the Divine speech is free from all these faults. Whether it is from the verbal point of view or from the point of view of meaning, whether it is from the literary viewpoint or from the point of view of intellectual content, the Divine speech is faultless. God says that if the Qur'an had been a man's own speech, twenty-three years of its revelation would have introduced many discrepancies in it, but test it from any point of view and you will find no defect in it, either in its eloquence or in its content. This in itself is enough to decide whether the Qur'an is Divine in origin or it is the speech of a man.

God asks why men do not meditate over the Qur'an; if they meditate on it, all their doubts will be dispelled. This shows that pondering over the Qur'an is necessary for a ripened faith. The Qur'an has come not merely to be recited, not that people may enclose it and keep it in beautiful covers, not that Muslims may merely kiss it. It has been revealed so that we may ponder over its words and contents and by so doing we may enlighten our thought and practice.



## GOOD AND BAD RECOMMENDATION

مَنْ يَشْفَعُ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَكُنْ لَهُ نَصِيبٌ مِنْهَا  
وَمَنْ يَشْفَعُ شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَكُنْ لَهُ كِفْلٌ مِنْهَا  
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقِيتًا ۝

“Whoever recommends and helps a good cause becomes a partner therein : and whoever recommends and helps an evil cause, shares in its burden : and Allah hath power over all things” (iv. 85).

Recommendation has become a necessary practice in modern society, but most people are not aware of its proper limits. In this verse, light has been thrown on this problem.

God says that if you make a recommendation for some good cause, it is a virtue of a high order. Similarly, if you try to secure the rights of a deserving person, it is tantamount to a good intercession in the eyes of God and His Prophet. If a person prays for another Muslim brother in the latter's absence, that is good intercession. The Holy Prophet has said that when a Muslim prays for another Muslim in the latter's absence, the angels say “Amen” over his prayer. But it should be remembered that if you

*Good and Bad Recommendation*

demand remuneration for some recommendation, that is unlawful, according to Muslim legists. One's recommendation for another should be free from monetary motives.

Then God says that if you intercede for a bad cause or make yourself a means for the promotion of a bad cause, you will have an equal share in it and an evil deed will be entered against you in your register of deeds. Anyone who uses his influence in favour of an undeserving person really deprives a deserving person of some right. The commentators say that backbiting is also in reality an intercession in a bad cause, because the backbiter tries to poison the relation of two Muslim brothers. Once the Prophet said to his Companions: Shall I tell you who is the worst man? Then he himself replied: Those who move about backbiting and spoiling the relations of friends.



## RULES OF GREETINGS

وَإِذَا حُيِّيتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ  
رُدُّوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا ۝

“When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy. Allah takes careful account of all things” (iv. 86).

In this verse rules of greetings have been laid down.

It must be understood at first that the words used by Islam for the purpose of salutation are such that no other culture or nation in the world can equal them in their import. The mode of salutation prescribed by other religions and nations at the most expresses the desire that he who is saluted should pass his morning, noon, evening or night in a good condition. But Islam which is the religion of peace, and which literally means peace, goes further and teaches a mode of salutation which covers both the good of this world and the good of the Hereafter. *Assalam-o-Alaikum* means: Peace be upon you both from the physical and spiritual viewpoint. In other words, “You may be safe from bodily afflictions as well as from spiritual afflictions.”

## Rules of Greetings

The salutation is addressed to a single man but it uses the plural tense, “*Alaikum*,” which means that peace may descend upon all the believers.

According to the rules of greetings framed by the *Shari'ah* (Law of Islam), the rider is required to salute the pedestrian, the man who walks should salute the man who sits, the smaller party should salute the larger party and the minor should salute the elders. Islam is so large-hearted that if a Muslim salutes a non-Muslim, it has no objection to it. It is better to take initiative in saluting others. The Holy Prophet has said that a person who takes initiative in saluting is free from pride.

God says: Do not think these are minor matters of which no account will be taken. God is the Keeper of all things and He will take account of everything. Therefore, it is our duty to take into consideration His pleasure even in minor matters.



## MURDER OF A BELIEVER

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعِدًّا أَقْبَرَاءَهُ جَهَنَّمَ  
خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهُ  
وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا ۝

“If a man kills a Believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein (for ever): and the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him” (iv. 93).

In this verse, the punishment for the intentional murder of a Muslim has been laid down. There is a murder by error and there is a murder by intention. Murder by error means that a person kills another without the intention of murdering him and out of forgetfulness. For example, a person fires a bullet to kill a prey but it actually kills a Muslim. Intentional murder, on the other hand, is that in which a person kills another with full intention and quite consciously. The punishment laid down in this verse for the intentional murder of a Muslim is hair-raising and fear-inspiring. Read the whole of the Qur'an and you will not come across so many threats for one crime except the crime of disbelief and associa-

*Murder of a Believer*

tion of other deities with God. God says: His punishment is Hell. Then He says: He will abide therein for ever. Further He says: God curses him and is wroth with him. As if this was not enough, it is said: God has prepared for him a grievous chastisement. According to the rules of the Arabic grammar, “grievous chastisement” is a common noun, which means a chastisement undetermined and which defies description.

All the schools of thought among the Muslims agree that if a person kills a Muslim because of his faith, this is disbelief. But in other cases it is the most heinous sin among the major sins and ranks second only to the association of other deities with God. Therefore, the Traditions of the Prophet show that on the Day of Resurrection cases of murder will be decided first. The Prophet has said: The murder of a Muslim is more grievous in the sight of Allah than the destruction of the world. Let us pray that Allah may preserve all believers from committing this sin.



## DON'T ENTER INTO SECRET COUNSELS

لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ نَّجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ  
أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ  
ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ۝

"In most of their secret talks there is no good: but if one exhorts to a deed of charity or justice or conciliation between men, (secrecy is permissible): to him who does this, seeking the good pleasure of Allah, We shall soon give a reward of the highest (value)" (iv 114)

One of the objects of the advent of the Holy Prophet was to bring mankind to moral perfection. The Prophet himself says: "I was sent for perfecting moral and ethical virtues." This is the reason why the Prophet's teachings encompass the whole of ethics and even minor details have not been overlooked.

Take the above verse. Here commands have been laid down with regard to secret counsels. God says that there is no good in most of the secret counsels. They are purely evil. Islam has gone so far as to prohibit two persons from talking secretly in the pre-

*Don't Enter into Secret Counsels*

sence of the third. This is likely to create misgivings and injure the feeling of the third person who is left alone. Similarly, it is unlawful to spread rumours without confirming them or to propagate unconfirmed reports. It has even been laid down that it is sufficient to stamp a man as a liar if he hears something from others and then reports it to others without inquiring into its truth. Of course, in a few cases, secret counsels have been allowed, for example, in charity, where concealment is advisable, or when you are advising a person to practise some virtue. This is necessary so that other persons may not hear it and the former's feelings may not be injured. Similar is the case where reconciliation has to be effected between two persons. In such cases it is permissible even to tell a lie, so that misunderstandings may be removed.

Finally, a condition has been laid down that all this should be done to earn the pleasure of God. If this is done, God will reward you even for your secret counsels.



## TRUE TESTIMONY.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ  
لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوَالِدَ الَّذِينَ وَالَاقْرَبِينَ ج

“O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin . . .” (iv. 135).

Justice holds a fundamental position in Islam. It is an attribute of God and one of His ninety-nine names. For the same reason the Qur'an insists again and again on the Muslims to stand firm on justice.

A man acts unjustly for two reasons. Either he exceeds the limits because he is inimical or hostile to someone or he favours someone who is his friend or relative. But the Qur'an and he to whom the Qur'an was revealed have changed the concept of friendliness and enmity. They have declared that we should be friends or enemies only in the cause of Allah and allow this principle to regulate our relationships with others. They have advised that one should be just even in the heat of passion when reason becomes overlaid with emotion and one should be just when friendship or kinship strongly

## True Testimony

dictates one to favour one's friends or kinsmen. There is a special position of testimony in the matter of justice. God says: Your testimony should be only for the sake of God. Be true witnesses even if it be against your relations, your parents or against your own selves. In the matter of testimony, the disposition of Islam is so sensitive that the Holy Prophet has equated false testimony with a sin as heinous as the association of other deities with God. In false testimony, people swear by the name of God and take oath on the Qur'an. But if the Muslims order their lives according to the teachings of the Qur'an, they cannot conceive of false testimony even without an oath.

Let us pray that Allah may enable us to maintain justice and bear true testimony in all the affairs of life.



## FAULT-FINDING

لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ  
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا ۝

"Allah loveth not that evil should be noised abroad in public speech, except where injustice hath been done: for Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth all things" (iv. 148)

In the verses preceding, the discourse was about the hypocrites. Here the command is being given that no particular person should be called a hypocrite. This is because God does not like that fault should be found with some person or that some evil habit or quality in a person should be mentioned either before him or in his absence, except where a religious need requires such a step, as when a person has been wronged and he complains of the wrong done to him.

Talking ill of a person can take two forms only. One, that his faults and evil qualities may be mentioned in the company of some people where he is present. Secondly, he himself may not be present and his evil qualities are mentioned behind his

## Fault-Finding

back. The *Shari'ah* (law of Islam) has declared that both these forms of fault-finding are unlawful. Generally, when people talk ill of a person, they claim that they have such irrefutable evidence with them that they can talk about him in this way in his face. But this does not make permissible what has been declared unlawful by the *Shari'ah*. What the *Shari'ah* calls backbiting is this very fact that a person suffers from some fault which is mentioned in his absence. If the person does not suffer from the fault which is being mentioned, this is slander, not backbiting, and in the law of Islam a punishment has been laid down for this.

God does not like backbiting and the Holy Qur'an equates it with eating the flesh of a dead brother. The Holy Prophet has said that this sin is more heinous than the sin of associating other deities with God, because if a person repents of the latter, he may be pardoned. But backbiting is not pardoned, unless the person wronged has pardoned it.



## SMALL PRICE

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَأَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا  
أُولَئِكَ لَا خَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ  
وَلَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ  
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۝

"As for those who sell the faith they owe to Allah and their own plighted word for a small price, they shall have no portion in the Hereafter: nor will Allah (deign to) speak to them or look at them on the Day of Judgment, nor will He cleanse them (of sin): they shall have a grievous Penalty" (iii. 77).

In this verse great stress has been laid on the fulfilment of covenants and clean dealings. Although the context shows that mention is here being made of the People of the Book during the days of the Prophet, indirectly the believers have also been addressed and the Holy Qur'an has taught them also a moral lesson.

Generally, it is observed that when a man falls a prey to greed, he remembers neither the covenant which he has entered into with Allah nor does he realise that the aim is unholy for which he is taking

*Small Price*

oath after oath. This situation has been described by the Qur'an to be tantamount to selling one's religion for a small price. This does not mean that one should accept a high price for one's covenants, oaths and honesty. What it means is that for violating the commands of God and for selling one's honesty, whatever price is accepted, it is a small price, because even the whole universe cannot be a substitute for this precious object.

God says: Whoever will do this, for him there will be a painful chastisement. Such a person, on the one hand, will be deprived of the good of the Hereafter. Secondly, God will not look upon him with kindness on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He talk with him out of His mercy, neither will He cleanse him of his sins. He will have to taste a painful punishment.

The commentators of the Qur'an have pointed out that there are very few crimes for which so many punishments have been prescribed by the Qur'an. This shows how important it is, according to Islam, to observe covenants, to act honestly and to desist from taking false oaths.



## PHILOSOPHY OF MORALS IN ISLAM

إِنْ تَبْدُوا خَيْرًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ أَوْ تَعْفُوا عَنْ  
سُوءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا قَدِيرًا ۝

“Whether ye publish a good deed or conceal it or cover evil with pardon, verily Allah doth blot out (sins) and hath power (in the judgment of values)” (iv. 149).

This Qur’anic statement is very brief, but, as explained by Imam Razi in his *Tafsir-e-Kabir*, it contains the essence of the Islamic philosophy of morals.

In this verse, three grades or levels of virtue have been described. “Whether ye publish a good deed” is the first grade. Man does some good, and since it is natural to a certain extent to wish that he should be praised for his good deeds, he does it openly to win the admiration of the people. This is also a virtue but of a very elementary type. After this it is said: “or conceal it”. This is the second grade of virtue which consists in not seeking to win the admiration of the people and not letting them know it. Only the pleasure of God is sought. Again, it is said: “or cover evil with pardon”. This is the

*Philosophy of Morals in Islam*

third grade of virtue and consists in doing good to those who wish ill of you. They cause you distress, but you overlook it; they bring troubles upon you, but you pardon them. This third grade of virtue is the most difficult and disagreeable to one’s inner self. This grade is attained only by him whose “ego” becomes Muslim. God says: Although this level of virtue is very high, you should remember that forgiveness is one of the attributes of God. He is ever-pardoning and all-powerful. He forgives in spite of His power to do otherwise. When this is the attribute of God, the perfection of His creatures lies in imbibing this Divine attribute in themselves. They should return evil with good and where abuses are showered on them, they should return the abuses by praying for the abuser.



## FULFILMENT OF CONTRACTS

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ ۖ

"O ye who believe! fulfil (all) obligations"  
(v. 1)

*Aqd* (contract) in Arabic means a knot. It is as if a knot has been tied and it can be untied only when the contract has been fulfilled. In this verse the same command has been given, namely, that the believers should fulfil their contracts whether they have entered into those contracts with the Creator or the creatures.

In our society contract is generally taken in the sense of promise, although its sphere is much wider. It includes worship, dealings and all those forms of moral and social obligations of which the observance is incumbent on man from the standpoint of reason, religion and law. To return a trust in time is a form of contract. Similarly, custom prescribes certain weights and measures. This is also in reality a contract between the buyer and the seller, both of whom are under an obligation to fulfil it. This shows that a verbal promise is not necessary for a contract. The definition of contract covers all the

*Fulfilment of Contracts*

customs and norms recognised by society.

Contract is of three kinds. The first contract is that which man entered into with his Maker, in Eternity. God asked him: "Am I not your Lord?" Man replied: "Why not, Thou art our Lord."

The second kind of contract is that where a verbal promise is made either with or without an oath.

The third kind of contract is that which exists naturally between all those who have mutual obligations to each other in a society.

It is the legal duty of every believer to fulfil all these contracts. The Holy Prophet has said: "He who has no respect for contracts, has no religion."



## BASIS OF CO-OPERATION

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى  
الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ۚ

“Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour” (v. 3).

This piece of the Qur’anic verse is seemingly very brief. But it contains the whole kernel of the Islamic faith. With whom should one co-operate and with whom should one not co-operate? What are the guiding principles of helping one another in individual and collective life? In politics, what are the matters with which one should disagree with the powers that be? Light is shed by this verse on all these matters.

In today’s civilised and enlightened world, one’s nation and one’s party is the standard of right and wrong. An individual will support only the standpoint of his nation and party. He does not consider whether that standpoint is based on justice or injustice. But Islam gives us a teaching of another type. It says that in righteousness and piety one

*Basis of Co-operation*

should rise above the level of party and nation and help everyone. But in matters of sin and aggression, one should not help anyone, even if the latter be one’s relation or belong to one’s own party. It attaches no importance as to who says something. It gives importance to what is being said. Ali, the fourth Caliph, says: “Don’t see who is telling you something. See what he is telling you.” Freedom from prejudice and large-heartedness reached its acme when the Qur’an caused the Holy Prophet to address his contemporaries among the Jews and the Christians asking them to come together on a common platform.

This shows that in individual and collective life as well as in inter-communal and international affairs, the standard and basis of co-operation for the believers is good and evil. They are not opposed permanently to anybody. Whoever invites them to something good, they will help him, and whoever commits evil, they will withdraw their help from him.



## PERFECT CODE OF LIFE

الْيَوْمَ اكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَاتَّمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ  
نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

“This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion” (v. 4).

This is a famous verse of the Holy Qur'an. Two months and twenty-one days after the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet breathed his last. The real fact is that this verse had informed the believers of the approaching end of the Holy Prophet. This is the reason why some Companions of deeper understanding began to weep when they heard this verse. When they were asked why they wept after hearing this verse which gave the good news of the faith having been perfected, they replied that when the faith had been perfected, the mission of the Prophet also came to an end and he would not live long amidst them.

In this verse, the good news of the faith having been perfected has been communicated and this has been called “the completion of favours”. As far as

*Perfect Code of Life*

the Divine faith is concerned, it has existed since the first man was created, but its injunctions have been modified in every period, in every country and in every tribe. This is much like the different periods of man's life. In his childhood, he takes milk; when he cuts teeth and learns to walk, there is a slight change in his diet. Then he becomes a boy with different requirements. Then he reaches the age of puberty, and his requirements and needs also become completely different. This is also the case with mankind. In the beginning it was divided into tribes and clans. This was its childhood, when its needs were different. Of course, the Prophets were sent but they were sent for particular periods and for particular nations. When the Prophet of Islam came, mankind began moving towards unity. This was the youth of mankind. Countries and tribes came together. Means of communication began to develop. Human mind reached a high stage of evolution. This was the time when religion was declared to have become universal and perfected. Fundamental principles were laid down for the welfare of mankind which were to guide it till the end of time. Fresh problems were to be solved according to the self-same principles. This is the perfection of religion and this is the completion of Divine favours. After this no more Prophets are required and there is no need of any religion other than Islam.



## COVENANT IN ETERNITY

وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيثَاقَهُ الَّذِي  
 اتَّخَذَ بِكُمْ إِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَاتَّقُوا  
 اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ

"And call in remembrance the favour of Allah unto you, and His Covenant, which He ratified with you, when ye said: 'We hear and we obey': and fear Allah, for Allah knoweth well the secrets of your hearts" (v. 8).

As to the meaning of covenant in this verse, commentators of the Holy Qur'an have expressed two opinions. Firstly, that it refers to the covenant taken by God in eternity with all the souls. The Qur'an says that God gathered all the souls and asked them: 'Am I not your Lord?' All of them said: "Why not; Thou art, surely, our Lord." It is not necessary that this dialogue should have taken place in actual words. It is possible that the dialogue took place in mind and spirit. However, what is certain is that every soul entered into this covenant with God. That is the reason why the belief in Divine Unity or monotheism seems to be the demand of

*Covenant in Eternity*

nature. One may forget God completely, but one is bound to remember God at some turn of one's life. In reality, this is a manifestation of the covenant made in eternity.

Another opinion is that here covenant refers to that promise which a Muslim makes when he accepts Islam. The Companions of the Prophet were in a favoured position because they swore fealty to the Prophet at his hand. The common Muslim enters into this covenant at the time when he bears witness to the Unity of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and accepts to obey the commands of God.

Whatever be the true nature of the covenant, it is the duty of every man to remember his covenant with God made in eternity and to live a life of piety and God-consciousness instead of being forgetful of God. It is also the duty of every Muslim not to forget at any stage of his life the contract he has made with God and the Prophet at the time when he bears witness to the Unity of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him). He should also note that the contract has been made with God Who knows all that is hidden in man's breast and Who knows not only our acts and deeds but also our intentions.



## DON'T DO INJUSTICE

وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰٓ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا ۖ  
 اِعْدِلُوْا فَاِنَّهُٗ اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى ۖ وَاتَّقُوا  
 اللّٰهَ ۚ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝

"And let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah for Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do" (v. 9).

In human affairs injustice is caused by two factors: a man acts unjustly either because he wants to favour somebody or his antagonism and opposition to someone causes him to move away from the path of justice. In this verse, justice has been enjoined, keeping in view the second factor.

God says: You should not act inequitably towards any people because of your antagonism to it. You should be just in spite of your antagonism because piety and fear of God both dictate you to take this course. This command has been addressed to the Muslims and it is clear that the group opposed to the Muslims is that of the unbelievers. It comes to this: that you should discharge your obli-

*Don't Do Injustice*

gations not only to the Muslims but also to the unbelievers. There is no doubt that disbelief is something detestable, but this is no reason why we should not fulfil the requirements which come out of respect for humanity. Man is, after all, man, whether he is a believer or an unbeliever. That an unbeliever is a man, is a sufficient reason why no injustice or excess should be done to him. The commentators have well remarked, while commenting on this verse, that a law which stresses the discharge of obligations to rebels and enemies cannot tolerate that a sin which is less heinous than disbelief or mere difference of opinion should cause Muslims to fight and quarrel with one another and forget the requirements of justice and equity.

Finally, it has been said that, although it is difficult to overcome and control one's emotions and to act equitably, you should, nevertheless, cultivate the fear of God. If the fear of God resides in your hearts, the most difficult stages of life will become easy for you.



## FAITH AND WORK

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ۝

"To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness hath Allah promised forgiveness and a great reward" (v. 10).

In Islam faith and work are closely interrelated. If one is likened to a tree, the other is its fruit; if one is taken to be a flower, the other is its smell; if one is like a body, the other is its spirit. If you study the Holy Qur'an in full, you will find that everywhere faith and work are mentioned together. What God has promised is conditioned by both faith and work. Neither faith alone nor work alone is required by God. If there is work without faith, it is hypocrisy and disbelief. If there is faith without work, it is a condition of sinfulness. It is certain that if the seed of faith is thrown on the soil of the heart, it will fructify and bear fruit. It is equally certain that work without faith cannot fructify without destroying the life of the spirit.

A study of this verse makes it clear that the Qur'an, in accordance with its peculiar style, has

*Faith and Work*

mentioned faith and work together. God says that those who believe have been promised forgiveness by Him. He will pardon their minor sins and give a good reward to them both here and in the Hereafter. It is a special favour of God that He has used the term "promise" for his reward. This has been done for the sake of emphasis. What this means is that it may come to pass that the sun rises in the west instead of the east, but it cannot happen that the promise of God remains unfulfilled.

What we need today is to take stock of our life both in the individual and collective spheres and attempt to enrich ourselves with good works, when we have been graced with the gift of faith. Because, just as mere works bring the good of this world but not the good of the Hereafter, similarly mere faith may bring some good to us in the Hereafter, but it may not bring peace and prosperity in this world.



## GREAT FAVOUR

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ هُمْ  
 قَوْمٌ أَنْ يَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ  
 عَنْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۖ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

“O ye who believe! call in remembrance the favour of Allah unto you when certain men formed the design to stretch out their hands against you, but (Allah) held back their hands from you: so fear Allah. And on Allah let Believers put (all) their trust” (v. 12).

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly the “people” mentioned in this verse of the Holy Qur’an. According to some commentators, these people were the Quraish who were intent from the very beginning to destroy Islam. Some are of the opinion that they were the Jews who had decided to dedicate their wealth and intelligence in the times of the Holy Prophet for undermining the solidarity of the Muslims. Whatever the nation or people meant here, God is here reminding the believers of the favour done to them in upsetting the plans of a powerful people who were stretching out their hands against

## Great Favour

them. God says that after this victory, it is their duty to continue to fear God, because this is the only means of their success and prosperity. Secondly, they should rely on God, lest they indulge in self-worship and give greater importance to the material factors which brought them success than to Him Who caused these factors to favour them. If they do this, they will stray from the right path.

Although in this verse the Muslims of the days of the Prophet have been addressed, in view of the war of 6 September (1965), it seems that God is referring to our own history. It is a grace and a favour of God that He helped us to triumph over a powerful nation. Now it is up to us, after this great favour of God, that in our individual and collective life, we take the path to piety and fear of God and, instead of relying on others, we rely on God.



## KILLING OF MANKIND

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ أَنَّهُ  
مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي  
الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا ط

“On that account: We ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone slew a person—unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land—it would be as if he slew the whole people” (v. 35).

Killing of a believer has been declared the greatest sin in Islam. One who kills a believer intentionally and wilfully will be punished with Hell-fire till eternity. In this verse it has been clearly stated that not only the killing of a believer, but the killing of any man unjustly is tantamount to the killing of all mankind. God says that it had been made fully clear to the Israelites that there were only two legitimate ways of killing a man. Either because he had killed someone, therefore, he was being killed in retaliation, or because he had caused mischief in the land and committed crimes like robbery. Therefore, he was killed in the interest of public good. Killing of a man in other ways except

*Killing of Mankind*

these two is like killing all mankind. On the contrary, if one life is saved in a just cause, it is like the saving of all mankind.

The statement that the killing of a man is like the killing of all mankind has not been made in the language of the law and the court of justice. It does not mean that legally the killing of one man is equal to the killing of all mankind. The meaning of the verse is that if a cruel man is ready to kill one person unjustly, there is every likelihood that if he had the power and the strength, he would kill all mankind.



## JUSTICE AND EQUITY

وَإِنْ حَكَمْتَ فَأَحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ ط  
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ○

“And if thou judge, judge in equity between them: for Allah loveth those who judge in equity” (v. 45).

In Arabic *Insaf* (justice) means to divide a thing into two equal parts in such a way that neither part is greater or lesser than the other. In ethics, justice means that, both in speech and action one should conduct oneself in the affairs of life in such a way that the balance of truth does not incline one way or the other. The Holy Prophet says: “Equip yourself with the Divine morals.” Now, the morality of God consists in deciding things justly. Thus justice in action is a special attribute of God. Similarly, God speaks with truth and justice. Therefore, justice in speech is also the main characteristic of Divine morals. In this way a perfect believer is one who combines in himself the two attributes of justice in action and justice in speech.

The command given by Islam for observing justice and equity covers a man's ethical, social and

## Justice and Equity

political conduct and thus extends to all spheres of life. This means that there is no sphere of life to which this command does not apply. Stress has been laid on doing justice to orphans. For family life, the principle has been laid down that if you fear that you will not be able to do justice, marry only one woman. In daily transactions, the instruction was given that you should not cheat in weighing and measuring. In judicial matters, much importance is attached to the bearing of testimony. Therefore, it was enjoined that you should eschew false testimony, because this is a sin as heinous as the association of other deities with God. If you occupy the position of a judge, you are required not to allow your personal likes and dislikes to come in the way of justice. You should always remember that God dislikes tyranny and excess and loves those who act justly and equitably.



# LOVE OF WEALTH AND POSITION

فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا  
بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا

"Therefore fear not men, but fear Me, and sell not My Signs for a miserable price" (v. 47).

This verse has been addressed to the Jewish scholars of the days of the Holy Prophet. These scholars had read in the Torah predictions about the advent of the Last Prophet. They knew very well in the light of the signs and symbols mentioned by their Prophets that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Last Prophet. But, says the Qur'an, two things stood in the way of their accepting the truth. Firstly, they feared the people instead of fearing God. They knew that if they acknowledged Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the Prophet, the people will be highly displeased with them and thus they would lose their popularity. The other thing was that if the people were displeased, they would cease to give them gifts. Thus the process of receiving gifts from the people would come to a stop. In other words, they were stricken with two diseases: love of

## Love of Wealth and Position

position and love of wealth. In this verse the Qur'an tells them not to fear the people, but to fear God, and not to hide what their knowledge requires of them for the sake of a few coins.

Although this verse has been addressed to the Jewish scholars of the days of the Prophet, the two diseases mentioned therein exist even today as they existed in the past, and these are the two diseases which ruin the spiritual health of man. The first disease is to fear the people instead of fearing God and to hide the truth. The second disease is to fail to respond to the call of conscience for fear of loss. Every person who seeks moral self-improvement should try to root out these two diseases in all the affairs of his life.



## ONLY THE BELIEVERS SHALL TRIUMPH

وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ ۝

“As to those who turn (for friendship) to Allah, His Apostle, and the (Fellowship of) Believers,—it is the Fellowship of Allah that must certainly triumph” (v 59).

About the meaning of “triumph” in this verse the commentators of the Qur’an have expressed three views. All are agreed that this triumph shall take place in its perfect form in the Hereafter and those who take God and His Messenger for their friend shall be the recipients of high honour and success in the eternal life; while those who are antagonistic to God, His Prophet and the believers shall be disgraced.

The second view expressed is that triumph here means the triumph of the heart which lies in the strength of the heart. What is this strength of the heart? It is a characteristic of faith that when the human breast becomes the seat of Divine knowledge, and the heart is illumined with faith, man is not overpowered by adverse circumstances; diffi-

*Only the Believers Shall Triumph*

culties do not weaken his heart and even in the most difficult circumstances, he keeps the torch of faith burning.

The third meaning of this verse is that friendship with God and His Prophet and the mutual agreement and unity among the believers will bring them success in this world. And if they are ever overcome by the unbelievers, this will be a temporary phase and even in this trial and crisis the inscrutable wisdom of God will be at work.

This verse teaches us that the believers should be friends of God and His Prophet. This friendship of course lies in obeying the instructions of God and His Prophet in individual as well as collective affairs. Secondly, they should be friends with each other and this friendship should result in their solidarity and unity. If this unity is achieved from the coast of Nile to Kashghar (in Russia) and from Jakarta to Casablanca, the believers alone will enjoy honour and greatness both here and in the Hereafter.



## CALL TO PRAYER

رَإِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ اتَّخَذُوا هُزُوءًا  
وَلَعِبَاءُ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ۝

"When ye proclaim your Call to Prayer, they take it (but) as mockery and sport; that is because they are a people without understanding" (v. 61).

A regular system of congregational prayers in Islam was established in Medina after the emigration of the Prophet. Before that time there was no regular method of calling the people to prayer. The Prophet adopted the present system of calling to prayer after consultation with his Companions. As a result the walls of Medina echoed with the Call (to Prayer). The hypocrites and opponents of Islam were startled to find out that this mode of calling to prayer was so effective. They reacted by making noises out of mockery as soon as the Call to Prayer was made so that this call to virtue and well-being may not have any effect on the people.

The Call to Prayer is a distinguishing feature of Islam. In the first place there is no religion which enforces the custom of congregational prayers once

## Call to Prayer

every day, not to speak of five times daily. If sometimes it becomes necessary to call the people to worship, a bell is rung. It is an honour which is reserved for Islam that its system of calling to worship is itself a form of worship and not a mere means to worship. It is also a standing miracle of Islam that the words which came forth fourteen hundred years ago from the lips of the Abyssinian Bilal should be echoed even today in the East and the West. On this earth, there is hardly any time when, due to the differences of latitude, the Call to Prayer is not heard in some place or the other. An English thinker was surprised at the fact that Alexander the Great has passed into oblivion, while the Abyssinian Bilal is still alive. Iqbal unravelled the mystery by pointing out that it was the love of the Prophet of Islam which kept Bilal alive, when the Rumi (Alexander) became extinct.

The Qur'an says that these unjust people mock at this sacred call, the reason being that they do not make use of their understanding. Human reason demands that respect should be shown to the Call for Prayer and, in response to this Call, man should bow his head before his Creator Who is one and one only.



## MISCHIEF AND DISORDER

كَلَّمَآ أَوْقَدُوا نَارَآ لِلْحَرْبِ أَطْفَأَهَا اللّهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ  
فِي الْآرْضِ فَسَادًا وَاللّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ۝

“And hatred till the Day of Judgment. Every time they kindle the fire of war, Allah doth extinguish it; but they (ever) strive to do mischief on earth. And Allah loveth not those who do mischief” (v. 67).

At the advent of Islam, the Jews were both wealthy and influential and they had devoted all their efforts to stop the preaching of Islam. Under this dominating passion, they sometimes intrigued by extending financial aid to the enemies of Islam and sometimes openly fought against the believers. In this part of the verse, these same intentions have been uncovered.

God says that they kindle the fire of war because the Arabs used to kindle fire at the time of war. “Kindling the fire of war” in Arabic also means making preparations for war. God says that whenever they make plans for war and try to spread mischief in the land, He puts out this fire and upsets their plans, and God does not love the mischief-makers.

*Mischief and Disorder*

This shows that Islam is totally opposed to mischief-making and disorder. It has laid down for the believers the duty of making war (*Jihad*) for the purpose of suppressing mischief and disorder. *Jihad* (holy war) is not aggression and expansionism. *Jihad* is a means of suppressing disorder and it is resorted to when no other alternative is left. When a limb of the body is in the process of putrefaction, it is necessary to sever it from the body. Similarly, if a nation becomes intent on spreading mischief and disorder, the fire can be extinguished only by the blood of the warriors.



## REPENTANCE

أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونََهُ  
وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

"Why turn they not to Allah, and seek His forgiveness? For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (v. 77).

In Arabic *Taubah* (repentance) means "to turn," "to return" and "to come near from afar". This word has been used by the Qur'an both for the creature and the Creator. The *taubah* (repentance) of the creature consists in turning to God with a sense of shame (for his sins) and the *taubah* (repentance) of God consists in accepting the creature's repentance out of mercy.

In all the religions of the world man has been treated as a born sinner. They believe firmly that man must inevitably receive punishment for all his sins. This belief takes the form sometimes of belief in atonement and sometimes it takes the form of belief in the transmigration of souls. But Islam, as a perfect religion, does not allow man to fall into despair at any stage of his life. It says that if a man repents before he sees the signs of his approaching

## Repentance

death, God forgives his sins and gives him a place of refuge on the Day of Resurrection. Repentance is so much liked by God that He reckons it as a form of worship and assures His creatures that repentance will not only bring forgiveness but actually they will be rewarded for their repentance and good deeds will be entered against their names in the register of deeds because they felt sorry for their sins before their Lord.

Some people postpone repentance to their old age. They think they will become pious in their old age, after enjoying the pleasures of life in their youth. But when sinfulness becomes the second nature of man, he loses the capacity to repent. Hazrat Ali, the fourth Caliph of Islam, has said that the Prophet declared that when a man commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart. If he repents, the blackness disappears. But if he persists in committing sins, the blackness grows until his entire heart becomes blackened and man's ability to repent is taken away from him.



## INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

كَانُوا لَا يَتَنَاهَوْنَ عَنْ مُنْكَرٍ فَعَلُوهُ  
لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ۝

"Nor did they (usually) forbid one another the iniquities which they committed: evil indeed were the deeds which they did" (v. 82).

In the verses preceding, the Holy Qur'an was explaining as to why punishment befell the Jews. Now in this verse it is pointed out that one of their crimes was that they did not forbid one another the evils which they committed. Evil was committed before them, but they did not try to stop it.

This Divine statement shows that it is not enough in the eyes of God that a man becomes virtuous personally. It is necessary for him to preach to the people around him to live a life of virtue. If a person does not try to stop some evil taking hold of society, the result will be that at some stage he too will suffer from the consequences of the evil. This has been pointed out by the Holy Prophet in a simile. He said that the relation between an individual and his society is like that of a two-storeyed boat sailing

*Individual and Society*

on a river. The drinking water is in the upper storey and the people in the lower storey have to get to the upper storey to fetch water. Disgusted with this labour, the people in the lower storey think of making a hole in the bottom part of the lower storey to get water from the river and to be saved from the labour of getting to the upper storey every time they have to fetch water. The Prophet said that if the people in the upper storey do not prevent the people below from committing this action, the result will be that the whole boat will be filled with water and the people in the upper storey will also drown along with the rest of the people.

In this simile, the Prophet has beautifully expressed the true relation between the individual and the society. In the light of this, it becomes our duty to reform our society side by side with making efforts for self-improvement. We should be virtuous ourselves and try to make others virtuous. We should join together in safeguarding the boat in the safety of which lies our own safety.



## THE JEWS AND THE HINDUS

لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا ۚ

"Strongest among men in enmity to the Believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans" (v. 85).

Among the many factors which create mutual love and amity among the people, the main factor is that those who love each other share common ideals and a common intellectual standpoint. As this is true in the case of individuals, so it is also a fact that nations and communities are drawn together by the strength of this factor. Nations are attracted to each other when they share common ideals and possess the same intellectual standpoint. Seen from this point of view, a Muslim nation can enter into lasting friendship only with a nation that shares the common faith of Islam with it. However, cordial relations may be forged with other nations too if the national interests require this for the maintenance of peace and the pursuit of common purposes.

In this verse the Qur'an has pointed to a fundamental fact, while shedding light on relations with

*The Jews and the Hindus*

other nations. Although the nations mentioned here are those which existed during the days of the Prophet, it is a standing miracle of the Qur'an that the comment it has made on the relations with these nations is still true, after the passage of fourteen hundred years. God says to the Prophet that he will find two nations who are most actively hostile to the believers. These are the Jews and the polytheists, that is, the idolaters. This means that Muslims can expect some good from other nations, but these two groups can never be the well-wishers of Muslims.

If we look at the conditions of the world today, we will find that the world of Islam is faced by two most difficult problems. One is the problem of Palestine and the other is the problem of Kashmir. The Palestine problem has been created by the Jews, while the Kashmir problem has been created by the polytheists. Thus these two nations, the Jews and the Hindus, are, in accordance with the warning of the Qur'an, most actively hostile to the Muslims even today.



# REVOLUTIONISING EFFECT OF THE QUR'AN

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنُهُمْ  
تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ يَقُولُونَ  
رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ۝

“And when they listen to the revelation received by the Apostle, thou wilt see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognise the truth: they pray: Our Lord! we believe; write us down among the witnesses” (v. 86).

The revolutionising effect of the Qur'an is a fact which has been recognised on all hands. Those who understand its meaning cannot be placed in the same category with those who are ignorant of its meaning. But the hearts even of the latter category of people become softened when they hear the Qur'an recited. The history of Islam is replete with incidents when some of the greatest opponents of Islam underwent a complete change of heart on hearing the Qur'an. The story of Hazrat Umar, the second Caliph of Islam, is well known. When he heard the Qur'an recited by his sister, he was converted to Islam, although he had gone there with the intention to assassinate the Holy Prophet. Iqbal refers to

## Revolutionising Effect of the Qur'an

the same incident in a verse addressed to the Muslim woman which means “You do not know how your recitation of the Qur'an changed the destiny of Umar.”

This verse also refers to the revolutionising effects of the Qur'an. Addressing the Holy Prophet, God says: One of the marks of those who recognise the truth is that when they hear the Qur'an, tears flow down their eyes. The commentators of the Qur'an are of the view that here the reference is to King Negus and his courtiers. When the emigrants reached Abyssinia under the leadership of Jafar the son of Tayyar the King asked them to recite the Qur'an. At this, Jafar recited the chapter out of the Qur'an entitled “Maryam” (Mary). When the King heard this recitation, tears flowed from his eyes. The Holy Prophet honoured King Negus for his faith by offering funeral prayer for him when he heard of his death.

The gist of this verse is that when people recognise the truth, their hearts are softened and, as a result of their recognition of Truth, when they hear the Qur'an recited, tears flow down their eyes and they begin to cry: “Our Lord! we believe; write us down among the witnesses.”



## ISLAM AND THE PLEASURES OF LIFE

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحَرِّمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ  
 اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا  
 يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ۝

"O ye who believe! make not unlawful the good things which Allah hath made lawful for you, but commit no excess: for Allah loveth not those given to excess" (v. 90).

Generally, the people err by excess or defect in seeking the pleasures of life. There are some who think that taking advantage of the blessings and pleasures of life is opposed to piety and righteousness. According to them, the pious man is he who does not eat or drink pleasant things and who remains a mendicant. On the other side are those who do not observe any limits in enjoying pleasures. According to them, there is no life after this one; therefore, one should make the most of it. Islam strikes a goodly balance between these two standpoints. Islam does not approve of the misuse of lawful pleasures, nor does it regard it as piety to forgo the good things of life. In this verse, the Qur'an

*Islam and the Pleasures of Life*

urges moderation in this respect.

God says: Believers should not make unlawful the good things which God has made lawful. To make a thing unlawful may take three forms. Firstly, a man holds a belief that something is unlawful which is really lawful. This is disbelief. Secondly, a man may make something unlawful by word of mouth. For example, he may take an oath that he will not eat something. Thirdly, a man may render something unlawful by an act. For example, he may abstain permanently from something thinking that this will earn him the pleasure of God. This is monasticism which Islam does not permit. However, due to some special reason or on the advice of a medical doctor, one may abstain from something for a temporary period.

Afterwards God says: Do not exceed the limits. Exceeding the limits means that things made lawful by God may be treated as unlawful or they may be misused. Both these forms constitute exceeding the limits laid down by God. The believer is one who strikes a balance and observes moderation in all the affairs of his life and fulfils all the requirements of nature in the most handsome way.



## INJUNCTIONS REGARDING OATHS

لَا يُؤْخَذُكُمْ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ  
وَلَكِنْ يُؤْخَذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَّدْتُمُ الْأَيْمَانَ ۚ

“Allah will not call you to account for what is futile in your oaths. But He will call you to account for your deliberate oaths” (v. 92).

In this verse injunctions regarding oaths have been explained. *Ayman* (oaths) is the plural of *Yamin* which means power. By *Yamin* (oath) is meant that oath which is taken in the name of God or one of His attributes, as “I swear by God.” Oaths may also be taken casually, for example, “I swear by your head” or “I swear by your life.” Such oaths have no significance in the *Shari‘ah* (Law of Islam).

There are three forms of *Yamin* or oaths taken in the name of God or one of His attributes. For example, to take a false oath about some past event, as one may say that a certain man had come here, while he knows that the person did not come. This is a great sin in the *Shari‘ah* and is called *Ghumus*. Another kind of oath is called *Munaqadah*. This oath is taken in regard to future events. As a person may

## Injunctions Regarding Oaths

say: “I swear by God that I will not do this work,” and yet he does the work. One has to atone for such oaths and the atonement consists in feeding ten indigent persons. If he cannot feed ten indigent persons, he should fast for three days. There is also another form of oath regarding future events, as when a person takes an oath for doing some misdeed. For example, he may take an oath that he will not offer prayers. In this case also one should break one’s oath and atone for it.

The third kind of oath is called *Laghw* (futile) as when a person conjectures that something took place yesterday and, on the basis of this conjecture, he takes an oath, while in fact no such thing had taken place; or as people take oaths habitually and inadvertently in minor matters. Although the *Shari‘ah* does not approve of such an oath, one is not called to account for it. God forgives it.

After studying these injunctions regarding oaths, one may form an idea as to how our religion, Islam, guides us in every sphere of our life. Now, it is up to us to understand these things and to try to practise them.



## DRINKING AND GAMBLING

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ  
وَالْبُغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالنَّبِيرِ وَيُضِدَّكُمْ عَنْ  
ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ ۝

“Satan’s plan is (but) to excite enmity and hatred between you, with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah, and from prayer. Will ye not then abstain?” (v. 94).

The evils of drinking and gambling are well known the world over. Here the Qur’an mentions two fundamental evils of these bad habits. One of the evils relates to this world and the other is purely religious. The evil relating to this world is that they promote quarrels and disorders and give rise to mischief. Daily events testify to the truth of this observation. Gambling and drinking lead to mutual abuse and clashes. Once a man adopts these accursed habits, he cares neither for his own self-respect nor for the honour of others.

The other evil pointed out by the Qur’an is that they prevent a man from remembering God and from prayers. Remembrance of God is something

## Drinking and Gambling

which relates to the heart of man, while prayer involves the use of limbs and their subjugation for religious purposes. The meaning is that those indulging in these habits do not observe the external Commandments of God, nor do they think of their Creator in the inner recesses of their hearts. The spiritual effects of drinking were described by the Holy Prophet who said that if a man drinks, his prayers for period of forty days after this act become unacceptable to God.

After describing the spiritual and material evils flowing from these two habits, God enquires: “Will you then abstain?” The commentator of the Qur’an, Ibn Jarir, writes that when this verse was revealed, the believers of the days of the Prophet cried out: “Our Lord! we have abstained.” Their abstention was so remarkable that whoever heard of the use of wine having been declared unlawful smashed his jugs (of wine). On that day wine was flowing in the streets of Medina as water flows after the rainfall. It was a miracle of the Qur’an and the bearer of the Qur’an that those who had been habituated to drinking and gambling became missionaries for their prevention.



## FUTILE QUESTIONING

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَسْأَلُوا عَنْ أَشْيَاءَ  
 إِن تُبَدَّ لَكُمْ تَسْأَلُكُمْ وَإِنْ تَسْأَلُوا  
 عَنْهَا حِينَ يُنَزَّلُ الْقُرْآنُ تُبَدَّ لَكُمْ ط

"O ye who believe! ask not questions about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble. But if you ask about things when the Qur'an is being revealed, they will be made plain to you" (v. 104).

In this verse futile questioning has been forbidden. Some people are in the habit of hair-splitting. They pry into everything and form suppositions. From these suppositions they arrive at certain questions of which answers they seek. Sometimes the Prophet felt troubled because of such futile questions. The Traditions say when the verse relating to Hajj was revealed, a person asked the Prophet whether it was a duty of the Muslims to perform the pilgrimage every year. The Prophet kept silence. The person repeated the question. The Prophet again kept silence. He asked the same question a third time. Thereupon the Prophet said: "I feel pity for you. If I say yes, the pilgrimage to Mecca every

*Futile Questioning*

year will become incumbent upon the Muslims and you will not be able to carry out this command."

Similarly, there was some doubt about the parentage of a person. He came and put the question to the Prophet. "Who is my father?" The Prophet said: "Such and such a person." This reply exposed him. If he had not asked the question, his parentage would not have been revealed. Similarly, some other persons came to the Prophet and asked about things which had not been forbidden by God. As a result the sphere of permitted things was narrowed down due to the answers given by the Prophet. About such persons the Prophet remarked that the most guilty person among the Muslims was he who asked a question about something not forbidden; then as a result of his question, it was forbidden.

What the Qur'an wants to impress upon us is that the teachings of religion are plain and clear. They have no mystery about them. Therefore, its sphere should not be narrowed down by means of far-fetched questions or complex queries. It should be fully recognised that Islam is the religion of Nature. It does not allow us to waste time by asking futile questions or by uselessly prying into things not capable of intellectual explanation.



## PREACHER OR DIVINE WARDER

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ  
لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مِمَّنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ ۖ

“O ye who believe! guard your own souls. If ye follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray” (v. 108).

Preaching means to communicate to some person the teachings of religion with wisdom and gentleness. Unfortunately, some people think that the preacher is a sort of Divine warder who uses a big stick and forces others to accept his viewpoint. This verse refutes the above idea regarding the preaching of religion. God says: O believers, you are not required to do more than communicate the message of truth to others in the best possible way. Acceptance or no acceptance, you have done your duty. With what you are concerned initially is to take care of your own soul. Instead of searching for the defects and weaknesses of others, you should try to discover and remove your own defects. You will have to answer only for yourselves. You will not be asked why others did not listen to your preachings

*Preacher or Divine Warder*

or did not abstain from things which you forbade them to do. You continue to perform your own duty and do not try to bear responsibility for others.

In this verse, moderation has been urged in the preaching of virtue. If it is wrong to stop preaching or advising others, it is equally mistaken to forget oneself in the attempt to reform others, to probe into their intentions and talk in society about their lack of faith and straying from the path of virtue.

God says, if you are on the right path, it will do you no harm if others go astray. Your duty lies not in criticising others, but in taking stock of your own moral condition, in removing your own defects and trying to have right relations with God. It is for these that you will be called to account for on the Judgment Day.



## AFTER DEATH

وَقَالُوا إِن هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا  
نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ۝

“And they (sometimes) say: ‘There is nothing except our life on this earth, and never shall we be raised up again’” (vi. 29).

Among the truths in which Islam invites us to believe is the important truth of a Hereafter, that is, there is another world after this one where we shall live till eternity. This world is like an examination hall and a testing ground. Here man has been placed for a fixed time. A day shall come when this world will come to an end and, after their death, all men will be given a new life. Everyone will be presented before his Lord and men will be rewarded or punished according to their deeds.

When this Qur’anic truth was presented to the people, many of them refused to believe in it. Even today there are people who doubt the existence of a Hereafter. They cannot understand how man will become alive again after his death, although the development of modern sciences has made it easier to understand

*After Death*

this truth. We know that the human body consists of innumerable particles of which a cell is the unit. A man’s body consists of about 26,000 billion cells. It is as if there are innumerable bricks which compose the human body. Science tells us that these bricks go on changing every moment until after every ten years all the bricks of the human body go to pieces and new bricks take their place. Thus after every ten years our body undergoes complete transformation, but the man remains as he was. In this way a man of fifty years dies five times and is born five times. The question naturally arises that if the human body can die five times and then become alive again, why is it not possible for the same body to live a sixth time after its physical death?

The fact is that belief in the Hereafter not only accords with our sense of justice but also does not conflict with our reason. And the condition is that man should not think about such problems from a purely materialistic standpoint.



## FISH AND FISH-HOOK

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ  
 أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ط حَتَّى إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا  
 أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ ۝

“But when they forgot the warning they had received, We opened to them the gates of all the (good) things, until in the midst of their enjoyment of Our gifts, on a sudden, We called them to account, when lo! they were plunged in despair” (vi. 44).

Generally, wealth and prosperity are taken as marks of Divine pleasure. Similarly, when some people, following wrong ways and disobeying Divine commandments, still enjoy the blessings of worldly prosperity, they begin to harbour the illusion that their conduct is morally satisfactory, until this illusion lands them into pride and insolence. It is the same with nations as it is with individuals. Economic prosperity, material uplift and the glories of worldly success stand in the way of their accepting the truth and, intoxicated with their worldly grandeur, they give no heed to the teachings of religion and morality.

The Holy Qur'an refutes this ill-considered view-

## Fish and Fish-Hook

point. God says: Do not be deceived by worldly prosperity and grandeur. You should take a lesson from the history of ancient nations. These were the nations who lived in stately mansions and had no rivals to their power and economic strength. But when they denied the truth, God showered upon them more favour to put them to test, until, when they went completely astray, God inflicted a punishment upon them and they were totally destroyed.

Maulana Rum has given a very good example to explain this state of affairs. When God blesses a person or a nation with His gifts despite his sinfulness and disobedience, it is like a fisherman who puts something on the fishing hook which can be eaten by the fish. The fish stretches its mouth to catch it. Then the fisherman loosens the string. The fish thinks that it is being entertained, until when the fishing hook entangles it, the fisherman pulls the string and the fish comes out of the water in a state of restlessness.

The gist of the matter is that we should not be puffed up with pride in case God blesses us with gifts despite our disobedience. This is a great test and those who are involved in it may, at any time, experience Divine punishment.



## CONCEPT OF GOD

وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ لَا

"When those come to thee who believe in Our Signs, say: Peace be on you: your Lord hath inscribed for Himself the rule (of) Mercy" (vi. 54).

The concept of God in Islam is not that of a blind and cruel power. It is rather that of a merciful and compassionate Master Who created this world to show His compassion, and when He sat on His throne, He inscribed on it the words; "My Mercy encompasses everything." The Holy Prophet says that God divided His mercy into a hundred parts. He kept ninety-nine parts with Himself and distributed one part among His creation. The love felt by the parents for their children is a reflection of the hundredth part of His mercy.

† To relate an incident of the days of the Holy Prophet. Once he was sitting among his Companions when suddenly a Companion of the Prophet arrived. He had concealed something in a sheet of cloth and two birds were flying over his head. He said: Under-

## Concept of God

neath my sheet are the offspring of these birds. When I went to the forest, I took them with me. From that time these birds have been flying over my head. The Prophet commanded him to return and put the birds where he found them. Then he said: God loves His creatures far more intensely than these birds love their offspring.

This shows that, according to Islam, God does not want to punish His creatures. His mercy is always there to forgive them. But the condition is that they should make themselves worthy of being forgiven.

The Holy Prophet once enquired of his Companions if they could think of a mother who throws her own child by her own hand into the fire. The Companions replied in the negative, whereupon the Prophet said: God is more compassionate to His creatures than the mother to her children. The gist of the matter is that we should never be unhopeful of God's mercy despite our sinfulness. The door of repentance is wide open every moment and God is ever ready to forgive all the sinners except those who rebel against Him.



## BELIEF IN THE HEREAFTER

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا  
جَرَحْتُم بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيهِ لِيُقْضَىٰ أَجَلُ مُسَيَّرٍ

“It is He Who doth take your souls by night, and hath knowledge of all that you have done by day. By day doth He raise you up again; that a term appointed be fulfilled” (vi. 60).

Two difficult questions arise in our mind about belief in the Hereafter. One is whether a day will really come when this universe will be destroyed. Would that come to happen? Secondly, is it possible for us to be restored to life after death? Since belief in the Hereafter is one of the principal foundations of Islam, the Holy Qur'an explains its different aspects repeatedly so that there exists no doubt to trouble our minds.

As far as the first question is concerned, namely, how can this whole universe be destroyed, the strange thing is not its destruction, Strangeness lies in thinking as to how it exists at all. The universe consists of a limitless void in which innumerable planets are moving blindly. This movement may at any time lead to a violent collision. If this happens

*Belief in the Hereafter*

the universe will look like millions of bombers with bombs laden in them dashing against each other while flying in the space. The situation arising from this event is termed Doomsday.

The second difficulty arises from the question: how shall we be restored to life after death? To grasp this idea the Holy Qur'an suggests to ponder on your sleep which makes you every night to die on a small scale. Somebody benumbs your powers. When the day comes, you wake up. If all this is possible and God makes you to die every night and then restores you to life daily, how could it be difficult for Him to raise you up again after the long sleep of death.

The fact is that these two arguments are sufficient for any reasonable person possessing common sense to believe in the Hereafter. As for those who disbelieve in the Hereafter in spite of these facts, they belong to a category of people who have eyes but see not, who have ears but hear not and who are possessed of understanding but think not.



## REVILE NOT EVEN THE IDOLS

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ط

“Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides God, lest they, out of spite, revile God in their ignorance” (vi. 108).

This verse teaches us two important lessons. The first lesson is that abusing any person is a highly disapproved act in Islam. Even the abusing of false gods is strictly forbidden, although these idols were built of stones and bricks. They were not sensible creatures who could hear one's abuses and be affected by them. When it is forbidden to revile and abuse the idols, how can it be lawful to use abusive language for a person who possesses sensibility. This habit is so bad that the Holy Prophet declared that it was the mark of a hypocrite. He said: The mark of a hypocrite is that he uses abusive language when he quarrels.

The second lesson taught by this verse is that we should exercise toleration in our mutual relationship with each other. Sectarian differences should not be given so much importance that they tend to break

*Revile Not Even the Idols*

up our unity as a community. In this verse of the Qur'an, believers have been asked to be so large-hearted as not to abuse and revile even the idols. How can it be lawful, then, that living as one community, our different schools of thought should show disrespect for each other's leaders. We belong to a community who, having fundamental differences with the idolaters, do not revile their idols lest their feelings may be injured and they may retaliate by reviling the one true God. How can it be, then, that for minor differences, we insult each other's leaders and ancestors?

The fact is that such narrow-mindedness and small-heartedness is opposed to Islamic teachings. Islam teaches us large-heartedness, breadth of outlook and toleration. It is unworthy on the part of its followers to insult or revile even the false gods.



## PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LIFE

وَذَرُوا ظَاهِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ  
يَكْسِبُونَ الْإِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَقْتَرِفُونَ ۝

“Eschew all sin, open or secret: those who earn sin will get due recompense for their earnings” (vi. 120).

Two kinds of sins have been mentioned in this verse and the command is that, after accepting Islam, one should eschew both of them. What are these two kinds of sins? God says: One is the exterior of a sin and the other is its inner side. According to some commentators, the exterior of a sin means its practical shape, while the inner side thereof means a false belief. Thus, one is practical sin, while the other relates to theory or belief. This explanation is not incorrect. But its best and most comprehensive explanation is that an open sin is that which is committed before the eyes of men, while a secret sin is that which is committed secretly. In many cultures, other than Islam, many acts of sin are not considered blameworthy in themselves. What is blameworthy is that one should be exposed. In ancient Greece, theft was not a crime, but if a thief was

*Private and Public Life*

caught in the act of stealing, he was punished. Similar was the condition of the Arab society, where sexual wickedness was not condemned; only the people were required to conceal it. Even in today's Western culture, sexual immorality is not blameworthy. It becomes blameworthy when it takes the form of a public scandal. Even today life has been divided into two compartments—public and private. Setting right of one's public life is the need of the day. As far as private life is concerned, it is solely a personal matter. You can do with it as you like. Islam does not approve of this compartmentalisation. According to Islam, a man's public as well as private life should be clean and spotless. That part of his life which comes only within the purview of the Creator must also be clean. Similarly, the part of his life which he lives among his fellow beings should also be spotless. Both his exterior life and his inner life should be free of any blame. His limbs should not commit any act of sin, while his heart should be free of impure thoughts.

According to the Holy Qur'an, if the case is not so, a day will come when man will be recompensed for his deeds and no division between exterior life and inner life or between private life and public life will be accepted by God.



## IN THE STATE OF NECESSITY

فَتَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ  
فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ۝

"But (even so), if a person is forced by necessity without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits,—thy Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (vi. 145).

Islam is the religion of mercy and the religion of nature. It contains directions for man's guidance through all the stage of his life, from his birth to death. It has provided facilities in difficult moments and has created conditions which enable a Muslim to follow the Divine commandments without feeling them burdensome. In this verse also, mention has been made of a similar facility.

*Iztirar* in Arabic means a state of utter necessity. In the terminology of the Islamic *Shari'ah* (law), it may take three forms. Firstly, a man may be on the verge of starvation. Secondly, a man may suffer from a disease recovery from which is impossible without taking something unlawful. Thirdly, some external power or pressure may force him to take something unlawful. In all these three cases, it is permitted to use

## In the State of Necessity

something unlawful with a view to saving one's life, provided it is not intended to derive pleasure nor are the proper limits transgressed. The unlawful thing should be taken only in the quantity which is necessary for saving one's life. After this, God says that He is Oft-Forgiving and ready to pardon. He does not merely forgive crime; sometimes He takes the edge out of crime. He is merciful. He creates facilities for His creatures taking pity on their difficulties.

This verse of the Holy Qur'an and the provision made in the *Shari'ah* for the state of necessity is indicative of the fact that the *Shari'ah* law has been prescribed to provide facilities for man and not to inflict hardship on him. The Holy Prophet has also declared that religion is easy. Those who labour under misunderstandings regarding the *Shari'ah* of Islam on mere heresay should consider these facts with a cool mind.



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## PLEASURE OF GOD AND WILL OF GOD

سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا  
أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَمْنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ

“Those who give partners (to God) will say, ‘If God had wished, we should not have given partners to Him, nor would our forefathers; nor should we have had any taboos’” (vi. 148).

At the time when the Holy Prophet made his claim to prophethood, the concept of Divine Unity had been overlaid with many false ideas. In spite of having been the best among creation, man had fallen to such a level that he prostrated before idols which he had carved out by his own hands. It is true that he acknowledged the existence of God, but he associated with Him many false deities of his own making and, to please them, many lawful things were declared to be unlawful, while many unlawful things were made lawful.

The Holy Qur'an and the bearer of the Holy Qur'an criticised these false ideas and practices and made the right path clear. Even then the disbelievers resorted to a strange logic. According to the Qur'an, they said, and people of the same mentality will

*Pleasure of God and Will of God*

say in future, that if we associate other deities with God or if we make unlawful things lawful or lawful things unlawful, we do so according to God's pleasure. If it had not accorded with the pleasure of God, why should He have permitted us to do so? In reply to this argument the Qur'an has made it clear that the will of God is one thing, while His pleasure is altogether different. Those who do not make a distinction between the two are misled. The will of God consists in man having been vested with freedom. He is at liberty to do good or evil. But His pleasure is that man should not come near evil. Whatever is happening in this universe is happening according to the will of God. He does not want to force His pleasure on His creatures. Virtue consists in human individuals avoiding the wrong path and taking to the right path by exercising their God-given freedom.

The verse teaches us that those who try to shield their misdeeds behind the will of God are neither acting nor thinking along the right line. This wrong thinking and evil-doing is a heritage handed down to them by their predecessors who had been misled and misguided.



## FORGIVENESS AND GRACE OF GOD

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ امْتَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ  
بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

“He that doeth good shall have ten times as much to his credit : he that doeth evil shall only be recompensed according to his evil. No wrong shall be done unto any of them” (vi. 160).

Fundamentally, God shall deal with His creatures in a spirit of forgiveness and grace. A Persian poet says that God’s grace does not seek a price : on the other hand, it seeks a pretext (to forgive). In other words, the mercy of God is not purchased at a price, because it is always in search of a pretext to forgive God’s creatures.

If we look at the content of this verse, we will find that it states the rate at which human deeds are recompensed. God says that if a man acts virtuously, one act of his will bring him ten rewards, but if he commits a misdeed, he will be punished only for one misdeed. This is the minimum rate of reward and punishment. Other statements of the Qur’an and the *Hadith* (Traditions) show that the reward for good acts reaches up to seventy times or seven hund-

*Forgiveness and Grace of God*

red times. Illustrating the example of a virtuous act, the Holy Qur’an says : It is like a seed sown in the soil which brings forth a shoot in every ear of which there are hundreds of seeds. This reward of virtuous acts comes from the grace of God. Even the intention to act virtuously has been placed by Him in the same category as an actual act of virtue.

In case a man forms an intention that he will do such and such an act of virtue but fails to live up to his intention, even then one act of virtue will be entered in his register of deeds. On the other hand, if he forms an intention to do evil but afterwards does not give practical shape to his intention, no sin will be recorded in his register of deeds. On the contrary, he will be credited with one good act, because he did not commit evil even after forming an intention to do it.

All this shows that God is Gracious and Merciful and those people do a great injustice who threaten others with His anger and forget His grace and mercy. Now, it is our misfortune if, in spite of His love and mercy, we do not take advantage of His forgiveness.



## UNITY OF GOD AND PROPHETHOOD

قُلْ إِن صَّلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ  
الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“Say: Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for God, the cherisher of the worlds: no partner hath He: this I am commanded, and I am the first of those who bow to His will” (vi. 162-163).

The entire gist and essence of the Holy Book is contained in these verses. If one ponders over them, one will realise the full import of the unity of God. In the previous verses, the Qur'an had been criticising the wrong beliefs and practical misconduct of the polytheists. Now, it is asking the Prophet to declare that, although they claim that they are believers in Abraham, their claim is refuted openly by their intellectual and moral life, as Abraham was the standard-bearer of Divine Unity, not of polytheism. Therefore, if anyone is following the path chalked out by him, it is he (the Prophet) and not they. After this, the Prophet is commanded to declare, like Abraham, that his prayers, his sacrifice, his life and his death are all for the pleasure of God.

## Unity of God and Prophethood

In other words, by revealing these verses, the Qur'an showed the signs by which a perfect believer can be recognised. This has also been made clear as to who is the follower of the path trod by His virtuous servants. God says: They are not those who divide their life into different compartments and keep some for trying to please God and some to please Satan. The perfect believer is he who subjects himself to the commands of God in every moment of his life, who passes his whole life, from beginning to end, in the thought of Divine Unity, whose friendship as well as enmity is for God's sake alone.

After stressing Divine Unity, the Qur'an makes clear the position of the Prophet. God says: “O Prophet, tell them: I have not come merely to preach the doctrine of Divine Unity. I am not only a preacher and a Messenger. My task is also to exemplify my preaching through practical conduct. Therefore, I declare that I shall be the first man to practise what I preach. He who seeks to follow the path set out by the doctrine of Divine Unity should follow my footsteps.”



## VICEGERENCY OF GOD

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ  
فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ إِنَّ  
رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ع

"It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth: He hath raised you in ranks some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He hath given you: for thy Lord is quick in punishment; yet He is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (vi. 165).

*Khalifah* in Arabic means agent or vicegerent. The great scholar, Raghib, says that *Khilafat* means acting for someone, whether this acting is due to one's absence, death, incapacity or under one's behest. This is to impress on the minds of the people the greatness of one's authority. In this verse God addresses mankind and says: We have made you Our vicegerents on the earth. It is clear that the reason why God has appointed man as His vicegerent does not lie in His absence or death or incapacity. The reason why man has been made vicegerent on the earth is that God wants to impress the greatness

## Vicegerency of God

of man on all His creatures.

Then God says: After creating man, We also created many ranks and grades. Some We made healthy, some We made sickly. Some were made handsome and some were made ugly. The reason for these differences was that We want to try you. You are on trial because We want to see how far you exercise those powers rightly which We have given to you, how far you feel grateful for the blessings We have showered on you and how far you keep in mind Our instructions in your dealings with your fellow-men.

Even in this state, God wants us to be always mindful of His attributes. The first is that He is quick in punishing, and this attribute manifests itself when He deals with those who are disobedient to Him. The second attribute is that He is Oft-Forgiving to those who eschew sins and take to the path of virtue. His third attribute is Mercy which He would manifest in favour of those who act as His representatives in this world as rightly as He wants them to act.



## RULES OF PRAYER

ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ۚ

ربكم

“Call on your Lord with humility and in private: for God loveth not those who trespass beyond bounds” (vii. 55).

Prayer is the soul and essence of worship. According to Islam, it is not selfishness or self-seeking. It is a matter of the servant's love for and relationship with his God. God is never displeased if you ask something of Him. He is displeased if you give up asking of Him. An Arab poet has noted a strange difference between God and His servants. He says that if you go on asking a most generous man for something repeatedly, he becomes angry. But the case with God is quite different. Ask Him repeatedly for His gifts, He will be pleased. Give up asking Him, He will get angry.

This verse contains certain rules for prayer. First of all, the words “your Lord” have been used to show that He is not a tyrant of whom you are asking. He is your Lord. He nourishes you and looks after

## Rules of Prayer

all your needs, spiritual as well as material. Therefore, do not hesitate in asking something of Him. Regard Him as your own master and, in view of the care He bestows upon you, ask of him ungrudgingly.

The second point stressed in the verse is that you should ask of him with humility. Do not pray to Him as if you are whispering some meaningless spells. Prayer is worship and the soul of worship is humility. Therefore, when you pray to God, you should be in a humble frame of mind.

The third point is that prayer should be offered silently. If you pray loudly, it will be supposed that you are taking God to be deaf, when He is really All-Hearing and All-Seeing. He sees everything and knows your intentions. It is said about the Prophet that once he passed by a few people who were praying loudly. He said: He on Whom you are calling is neither deaf nor distant from you. He is near to you and hears you very well.

These rules for prayer direct us that We should not hesitate in praying. Prayer should be offered with humility. Instead of crying loudly, we should pray silently. If these rules are observed, prayer is never ineffective. Either the prayer is granted immediately or it is stored for the Hereafter, or some adversity which might have befallen the worshipper is shoved off.



## UNITY AMONG THE MUSLIMS

وَاطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا  
وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

“And obey God and His Apostle and fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart; and be patient and persevering, for God is with those who patiently persevere” (viii. 46).

Events connected with the Battle of Badr were being related in the previous verses. The Muslims were told that there is only one way to achieve success, whether in peace or in war. It is their obedience to God and His Apostle and maintenance of unity.

As far as obedience to God and His Apostle is concerned, every Muslim believes that it leads to success in this world and in the Hereafter. But the important matter to be considered is that the Muslims have also been advised to maintain unity among themselves along with obedience to God and His Apostle.

God also says: Do not quarrel among yourselves. It is possible that you may differ among yourselves on a certain question, but this difference of opinion should not be allowed to take the form of mutual

## Unity Among the Muslims

opposition and conflict. If you do this, you will have to face two evil consequences. Firstly, you will be internally weakened, because when strength is dissipated, the necessary consequence is low moral. Secondly, the respect and awe which you inspired in the hearts of your enemies due to your internal solidarity and unity will disappear. When particles of dust become scattered, a small gust of wind blows them away, but when these particles cohere, they form an impassable desert. Similarly, if you fall a prey to internal conflict, the enemy will easily overcome you, but if you remain disciplined and obedient, you will have the upper hand in this world, God willing.

God says: Sometimes you differ among yourselves or with your leader. Some problem crops up which is against your natural inclination or some distasteful situation arises. At such a time you should exercise patience, because it is the way of God that He does not leave those people alone who exercise patience. His help comes to them and relieves them of all difficulties.



## MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF MUSLIMS

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ م

“The believers, men and women, are protectors of one another” (ix. 71).

A distinguishing feature of Islamic society is that the individuals who constitute it are one another's supporters and well-wishers. As the Prophet said: They are like the bricks of a building, each of which supports the other, or they are like the organs of a body. If one organ suffers from distemper, all others feel uneasy. The duty of mutual co-operation and help is one that never falls into abeyance. Once the Prophet said to his Companions: Help your brother whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed. The Companions said: One can understand that one should help the oppressed, but how to help the oppressor? The Prophet replied: You should help the oppressor by preventing him from oppression.

The details given by the Qur'an regarding mutual co-operation among the believers show that this includes the attempt made by the believers to remove the defects of one another. But the condition is that this attempt should be full of sympathy.

## Mutual Relationship of Muslims

The Prophet beautifully expressed this by saying that a believer is a mirror of another believer. One of the characteristics of a mirror is that in reflecting defects or beauties, it does not fall a prey to exaggeration. It gives a faithful reflection of the person with all his defects and beauties. Whatever the mirror has to say, it says in the face of the person concerned. Behind his back, it relapses into silence. The dark spot which it reflects does not displease the observer.

This verse teaches us the lesson that the believers should be sympathetic to each other and share in one another's sorrows. This is their distinguishing characteristic. As coolness cannot be separated from ice and heat cannot be dissociated from the sun, so the Muslims also cannot be separated from one another.



### DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ  
لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“O mankind ! there hath come to you a direction from your Lord and a healing for the (diseases) in your hearts—and for those who believe, a Guidance and a Mercy” (x. 57).

It is a great favour of God on humanity that He bestowed on them a gift like the Qur'an. In this verse, the Qur'an is introducing itself.

God says: This is an advice and a direction as well as a healing for the diseases of the heart. Similarly, it is a guidance as well as a mercy for those who believe. The famous commentator, Razi, has written that in offering this fourfold definition of itself, the Holy Qur'an really mentions four stages in the spiritual evolution of humanity. The first stage in human evolution is that the outward life of man should be free from all defects. This object is achieved by the Qur'an by means of advice and direction. The second stage is that, in addition to the outward life, man's inner life should also be free of

### Distinguishing Features of the Holy Qur'an

evils. The Holy Qur'an points to this by saying that it is a healing for the diseases of the heart. The third stage is that a man's ideas and beliefs should undergo a complete revolution. The Qur'an calls this a Guidance. The fourth and last stage is that, after passing the first three stages, man wins the pleasure of God and attains salvation. This is Mercy. This means that the teachings of the Qur'an cover every sphere of life. The fact is that without this Divine Alchemy (the Holy Qur'an) man's greatness is inconceivable.

Finally, the Qur'an also states the necessary condition without which no advantage can be derived from these features of the Qur'an. The condition is that man should have faith in his heart. If this foundation is lacking, no structure can be raised. It is true that the Qur'an benefits all men, but just as the soil affected by waterlogging and salinity cannot benefit from rain and just as the sun's light is useless for the blind, similarly the blessings of the Qur'an cannot benefit a man who has no faith and belief.



## BODY OF THE PHARAOH

فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيكَ بِبَدَنِكَ لِتَكُونَ لِمَنْ خَلْفَكَ آيَةً  
وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا لَغَفِلُونَ ٩٢

"This day shall We save thee in thy body, that thou mayest be a Sign to those who come after thee! But verily, many among mankind are heedless of Our signs" (x. 92).

This verse relates to the Pharaoh, who lived some twenty-two hundred years ago during the time of Moses and was drowned in the sea when he was in pursuit of the great Prophet.

Addressing the Pharaoh the Qur'an has, in this verse, advanced the claim that his body will be saved after having been drowned so that the world may know of the sad end of those who make false claims to divinity. When this claim was made by the Holy Qur'an many people did not realise its importance for a long time. Some opponents of Islam even giped and mocked at the Qur'an for what they regarded as an unfounded claim. But at last the time arrived which nature had fixed for the revelation of the real truth. Some ninety years ago, in 1881, a few British expert archaeologists found a box made of

## Body of the Pharaoh

stone while digging an ancient Egyptian cemetery. The box when opened was found to contain five dead bodies embalmed according to the science of the ancients. Every dead body had a tablet with it containing a brief description of the dead man. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,<sup>1</sup> one of the dead bodies was that of the Pharaoh mentioned by the Qur'an.

This shows that every claim made by the Qur'an rests on the secure foundation of truth. As scientific research develops, the world will testify to the truth of its claims. If, therefore, one is unable to understand today any fact related by the Qur'an, one should not make a hasty conclusion. A time will soon come when its truth will be revealed before one's eyes.

1. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edition, Vol. XVII, p. 22.



## THE PROBLEM OF SUSTENANCE

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا  
وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلٌّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ

“There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance dependeth on God : He knoweth the time and place of its definite abode and its temporary deposit. All is in a Clear Record” (xi. 6).

The Holy Qur'an mentions at many places that the sustenance of every man depends on God and this is such an admitted fact in Islamic tenets that no Muslim can possibly deny it. But here a question arises, namely, when the sustenance of every man depends on God, why is it that many people die of starvation in this world and nobody cares for them? Why is it that some people live in palatial buildings, while others do not possess even a hut to take cover? If the sustenance of man is in the hands of God, why does He not make provision for everybody?

To find an answer to this question, we should see how God reveals His existence. It is clear that no one can see Him directly. If you want to see God, you will have to look at the phenomena of the universe which give a clue to His existence. He can also be

*The Problem of Sustenance*

found in the society which is based on His commands and which is established on the system of life ordained by Him. In other words, when the Qur'an says that the sustenance of every man is in the hands of God, one of the explanations of this statement is that man's sustenance is in the hands of the society which claims to believe in God. Unless a society makes an honourable provision for all its members, it has no right to be called an Islamic society. One of the important characteristics of Islamic society is that it does not admit of oppressive inequities.

It is the duty of world Muslims, in accordance with the teachings of this verse, to enforce the Islamic economic system of a welfare society and to give a practical shape to the promise made by God to give sustenance to every man.



## SHORT WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

وَيَقُومِ أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا  
النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ۝

“And O people! give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due; commit not evil in the land with intent to do mischief” (xi. 85).

These words form part of a speech addressed by the Prophet Shu‘ayb to his people. The Midianites at that time were a nation of traders and many of them were guilty of dishonesty in commercial transactions because they gave short measures and weights. When God sent His Prophet among them, he tried to correct this evil. He told them that if they did not desist from such acts, their society would suffer from injustice and fall a prey to economic imbalance. Thus there would be disorder and anarchy in the land, the consequences of which would be dangerous and ruinous.

Generally, it is believed that religion concerns itself only with worship or bowing and prostration. But the Qur’an holds this to be false religiosity. According to the Qur’an, Islam is not a religion but

*Short Weights and Measures*

a *Deen* (a social order). It is a comprehensive system of life. It contains directions, not merely for worship in the mosque, but also for transactions in the market. There is no sphere of life on which it does not shed its light. Take, for example, trade and commerce. Although outwardly this is a worldly matter, the Prophet of Islam says that if a trader is honest in his dealings, on the Day of Resurrection, he will stand with the Prophets and the martyrs. This is the reason why the Qur’an treats it as a great sin to act dishonestly in commercial transactions and give short weights and measures. It has even stated that some nations met with Divine punishment because in their commercial dealings they were not honest and upright.

Honesty and uprightness in commercial transactions is one of the basic requirements of Islam. A society without commercial honesty has no right to be called an Islamic society.



## SHORT WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

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## CONVEYANCES OF THE FUTURE

وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا  
وَزِينَةً ۖ وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

"And (He has created) horses, mules and donkeys, for you to ride and use for show and He has created (other) things of which you have no knowledge" (xvi. 8).

The Book revealed to the Last Prophet contains solutions for the problems of the centuries to come as it solved problems relating to the past centuries. Just as the people of the ancient times received satisfaction and consolation from this Book, so do the people of the modern times derive benefit and guidance from it. Truly speaking, this Book treats as unfounded the distinction between the ancient and the modern. The standpoint with regard to what is ancient and what is modern is the same as Iqbal has stated in the following couplet :

Time is one, life is one, the universe is one.

To talk of the ancient and the modern is a sign of shortsightedness.

This Book, which has successfully solved the ancient and modern problems, has also, through its

*Conveyances of the Future*

eloquent hints, made predictions about those wonderful discoveries and inventions of science which will continuously appear upon the stage of the world in times to come. Thus it has taught its followers to assume leadership in this sphere as well.

When this Qur'anic verse was revealed, horses, mules and asses were used for conveyance and transport on land, and boats and ships were used for sea voyage. At that time nobody thought of trains, motor cars and aeroplanes. The people at that time could not conceive of other new means of transportation. But the Qur'an said: He will create what you do not know. Thus, it encompassed not only railways, motor cars and aeroplanes, but also hinted at the possibility of conveyances which will take man to the planets. All these conveyances are indirectly mentioned in the above verse.



## QUAKE OF THE DOOMSDAY

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ  
يَوْمَ تَرَوْنها تَذْهَبُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ  
وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَرَى

"O mankind ! fear your Lord : for the convulsion of the Hour (of Judgment) will be a thing terrible. The day ye shall see it, every mother giving suck shall forget her suckling-babe, and every pregnant female shall drop her load (unformed): thou shalt see mankind as in a drunken riot" (xxii. 1-2).

The interior part of the earth consists of a hot and fluid-matter which sometimes breaks out in the form of lava thrown out by the volcanoes. When this lava affects the earth, a rumbling sound is emitted and quakes are felt.

We are inhabited on red-hot molten matter from which we are separated by a thin rocky layer. This layer, as compared to the earth on which we live, is like the peel of an apple. According to a geographer, beneath our populated cities and blue oceans, a natural hell is flaming. We are standing on a large dynamite.

*Quake of the Doomsday*

If we study the details of the earthquakes recorded by history, we would feel as if they were convulsions of the Hour (of Judgment) on a small scale. Suddenly a rumbling was heard, the earth split and lofty mansions and huge buildings were washed away in this flood of fire. Millions of the dead bodies of human beings and animals were scattered as if they were heaps of dead fish lying by the sea-side.

Human sciences have recorded a phenomenal development, but nobody has yet discovered a device to find out when and where the earthquake will hit man. Man is helpless before Nature in this regard. In spite of this, he does not try to understand that these earthquakes may presage the greater convulsion of the Hour of Judgment.

In this verse the Holy Qur'an has tried to explain by citing the example of the earthquake. You must have observed that God breaks up the order of the universe when He wills and brings before your eyes, on a small scale, the spectacle of the Hour of Judgment in the shape of earthquakes. Is it difficult for Him to bring before you the tremendous convulsion which is called the Hour (of Judgment) ?



## ACTION OF THE HEART

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَآؤُهَا  
وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ ط

"It is not their meat nor their blood that reaches God; it is your piety that reaches Him" (xxii. 37).

Although this verse formally relates to the sacrifices of the animals, it contains the whole essence of the Islamic philosophy of worship. As for God Almighty, He does not need the meat or the blood of the animals. Neither the meat nor the blood of the animals reaches Him. He looks only at the intention and motive of those who offer these sacrifices. If their object is only to win the pleasure of God, then their sacrifice is acceptable. But if the intention is to acquire fame or make a show (of piety) or to promote self-interest in any form, then this is sheer waste of wealth and, instead of bringing a reward, it might invite the wrath of God or become objectionable in His eyes.

This is not confined to sacrifices. It applies equally well to prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, payment of poor-tax and all other acts and forms. It is the desire to obey God and His Prophet that brings to

*Action of the Heart*

you an immense reward. Such a person will gain comfort and consolation in this world and reap a rich reward in the Hereafter. But if these acts are performed from any other motives, they will be like a body without soul or a flower without sweet smell.

Islam gives first and foremost importance to intention in the performance of acts. The Prophet has said: Actions will be judged by intentions. All actions depend on intentions, as if intention is the root and acts are like trees. Intention is the foundation and acts are structures. Intention is the seed and acts are plants sprouting forth from the seed. In other words, every act consists of two parts. First the intention is made. This is the action of the heart. Next comes its outward expression. This is the action of the limbs. Islam gives greater importance to the action of the heart than to the action of the limbs. According to Islam, only that worship is acceptable to God which springs from heart's sincerity and good intention.



## PRIDE AND INSOLENCE

وَلَا تُصَوِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ  
فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ  
كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ ۝

"And swell not thy cheek (for pride) on men, nor walk in insolence through the earth; for God loveth not any arrogant boaster" (xxxi. 18).

This Qur'anic verse mentions the advice given by Luqman to his son. Luqman was famous as a sage and philosopher among the Arabs. Difference of opinion exists as to whether he was a Prophet or not. But the Qur'an has spoken of him with great respect as a sage.

The first advice he tendered to his son was that he must not swell his cheek. *Sa'r* in Arabic refers to a sickness of the camel in which he always keeps his neck turned to one side. This means that one should not adopt an indifferent attitude towards others. If there is a talk, it should be given due attention and heard with politeness.

The second advice given was that of not strutting about insolently, because God does not like arro-

## Pride and Insolence

gance and boastfulness. *Mukhtal* in Arabic means a person whose actions and manner of walking give expression to his arrogance. *Fakhur* is a person who is also boastful. This means that you should not try to overawe others by action or speech.

Islam highly condemns arrogance. Islam dislikes that any person should treat others with contempt. The Perfect Man, that is, the Prophet of Islam, has gone so far as to warn the Muslims that if a person labours in his heart even the slightest feeling of pride and arrogance, he will not enter Paradise.

Let us pray that God may not indulge us in pride.



## TALKING AND WALKING

وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْظُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ  
إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ ۝

“And be moderate in thy pace, lower thy voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass” (xxxi. 19).

Islam teaches us to be moderate in all things. This is the reason why the Holy Qur'an has called the Muslims “a nation of the middle path”. This principle of moderation applies equally well to worship. A man should not indulge in excessive worship so that he forgets his other duties, nor should he be so slack in worship as to forget his Lord. This teaching of moderation also extends to talking and walking so that a man's personality commands respect and the observer does not accuse him of bad taste and bad manners.

As far as quickness or slowness in talking and walking is concerned, any one of them may be adopted according to need. But some people display their arrogance in walking and talking as well. Either they will strut about proudly or they will bow down their head in utter humility, as if there is no

*Talking and Walking*

one humbler than them. Similarly, in talking some people talk loudly to overawe others or they talk so mildly that one feels that they are the very embodiment of humility.

God says that a person who talks loudly out of arrogance should not forget that the ass also brays loudly but no man of taste likes it. The person who struts about arrogantly should remember that he cannot pierce the earth by his gait, nor can he reach the heights of the mountainst. Therefore, reason demands that in walking and talking one should avoid artificiality and show. As in all other affairs of his life, he should also resort to moderation in talking and walking.



## SPEAKING THE TRUTH

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَتَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

“O ye who believe! fear God and (always) say a word directed to the Right” (xxxiii. 70).

This part of the verse preaches two basic virtues. One is *Taqwa* (piety) and the second is speaking the truth. *Taqwa* means fear of God. But this fear is not the result of terror, as when we are afraid of some dreadful thing. This is a fear which comes from facing something great, as we feel a certain measure of fear from our father or teacher. The Holy Qur'an says that a person who does not fear God or, in other words, who lacks the quality of *Taqwa* does not deserve to be called a human being. The Holy Qur'an itself speaks of being a guidance for all mankind. In another place, it says: I am a guidance for all men who fear God. This shows that, according to the Qur'an, to be a human being is to be pious and to fear God.

In this verse, the second basic virtue preached is speaking the truth. According to the Qur'an, the most important method of self-reformation is to avoid falsehood. An incident during the time of the

## Speaking the Truth

Holy Prophet throws light on this. A man came to the Prophet and said: “Prophet of God! I am a most sinful man. I commit adultery, I drink wine, I tell lies, there is no evil in the world but I suffer from it. How should I reform myself?” The Prophet said to him: “Promise me that you will act on my advice.” He made the promise. The Prophet said: “Give up telling lies. Always speak the truth and keep me informed of your daily doings.” He went away. Biographers write that whenever he started to do something wrong, the idea at once came to his mind that he would have to render his account to the Prophet. He could not tell a lie. If he informed the Prophet of his wrongdoing, he would have to feel ashamed. As a result he was gradually purged of all evils and the habit of speaking the truth revolutionised his conduct.

This importance of truth in self-reformation led the Prophet to say that to avoid sins one should hold one's tongue. In another place the Prophet said: When the son of Adam rises in the morning all the organs of the body tell the tongue: Fear God, we are with you; if you are right, we are also right; if you are crooked, we are also crooked.



### MENTALITY OF THOSE WHO REJECT THE QUR'AN

ص وَالْقُرْآنِ ذِي الذِّكْرِ ۝ بَلِ الَّذِينَ  
كَفَرُوا فِي عِزَّةٍ وَشِقَاقٍ ۝

“*Sad*: by the Qur'an, full of admonition (this is the truth). But the unbelievers are stooped in self-glory and separatism” (xxxviii. 1-2).

In these verses a very eloquent comment has been made on the mentality of those who reject the Qur'an and the Prophethood of Muhammad, God says that the Qur'an is not responsible for their rejection and rebelliousness. It is a book full of admonition. Everything has been made clear in it. Every difficulty has been solved. Every mystery has been unravelled. The real reason for their rejection is that they are steeped in pride and arrogance, and when a person suffers from this evil habit, he strays away from the right path. Just as the barren land has no vegetation even if there is rain, and just as the blind man cannot see in spite of the sunlight, similarly the light of the Qur'an cannot dispel the darkness from the minds of these people.

Islam disapproves of pride and arrogance. The

### *Mentality of Those Who Reject the Qur'an*

Holy Qur'an says that the first sin was committed by Iblis (Satan) when he became insolent. He was commanded to bow down to Adam, but he said: I am better than he. His pride and insolence resulted in his being thrown out of the presence of God for all time. So the first sin committed in this world was this sin of pride and insolence.

Pride and insolence denote a mentality in which a man, not only glories in his own greatness, but also holds others in contempt. Therefore, the Holy Prophet said: Arrogance consists in rejecting the truth and holding other people in contempt. During the time of the Prophet some people suffered from this disease and never got out of the slough of disbelief. Similarly, if today someone suffers from the same disease, the door of salvation and success will be closed on him.



## BETWEEN HOPE AND FEAR

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا  
يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُوا رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ ط

"Is one who worships devoutly during the hours of the night prostrating himself or standing (in adoration), who takes heed of the Hereafter and who places his hope in the mercy of his Lord" (xxxix. 9),

This part of the verse reflects the psychological state of a believer. In his belief in God, he is most sincere. At night when he is alone, he remembers God, stands reverently before Him and prostrates himself before Him. In spite, however, of this sincere worship which is free from any shade of pride, he is always afraid of his accountability in the Hereafter. However, this fear does not lead him to despair. Along with this fear he is hopeful of the mercy of God. He has strong hopes that on the Day of Judgment, God will deal with him mercifully.

In our society, people suffer either from excess or defect in the matter of God's attributes. Either they think of Him as a potentate from whose wrath there is no way of escape or they think of Him as an embodiment of mercy who will not punish man for

*Between Hope and Fear*

his sins. According to Islam, both these viewpoints may mislead a person intellectually and in practice. The truth, according to Islam, lies somewhere between the two. God, from the Islamic point of view, is the Master of the Day of Judgment and at the same time He is merciful and compassionate. Those who believe in Him are afraid that He will take account of them, but at the same time they seek and hope for His forgiveness. The Prophet of Islam has pointed to the same fact by saying that the believer stands between fear and hope. On the one hand, he hopes for the mercy of God; on the other hand, he is afraid that he will be taken to task for his evil deeds. Therefore, it is our duty not to be so much afraid of our sins as to lose hope of the Divine Mercy nor to place so much reliance on our good deeds as to stand on the brink of arrogance and shed all fear of Divine punishment.



### EVERYTHING HAS A PAIR

سُبْحَنَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُثْبِتُ  
الْأَرْضُ وَمِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“Glory to God, Who created in pairs all things that the earth produces, as well as their own (human) kind and (other) things of which they have no knowledge” (xxxvi. 36).

The Holy Qur'an is the word of God. It is meant for all the people who are to come till the end of time. Therefore, its miracles are inexhaustible. As knowledge and science advance, its truths are becoming clear to humanity. Time is now compelled to confirm the claims it made fourteen hundred years ago. At the time when this verse was revealed, the world only knew that all animals have males and females. But the Qur'an went a step further and said that even plants have males and females. There is nothing in this world but it has its pair. Unity belongs only to God. As for the rest of things, those before you and those of which you have no knowledge as well as those which lie in the womb of the future, all consist of pairs because the system of this universe is based on the unity of the positive and the negative

### *Everything Has a Pair*

and on the meeting of the male and the female.

When the Qur'an made this claim, the world did not fully realise its significance. But scientific research established the fact that the Qur'an's claim was true. Like animals, plants and minerals also have males and females. Not only this; in electricity and in the rays of the sun there are positive and negative pairs and this whole Universe is working by the interaction of the positive and the negative.

Those excessively wise men who demand a proof for the Holy Qur'an being the Divine Word, will find this sole argument sufficient for their satisfaction, if only they ponder over it.



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## PHILOSOPHY OF WORSHIP

بِإِلَهِ اللَّهِ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُنْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ۝

"Nay, but worship God and be of those who give thanks" (xxxix. 66).

In the preceding verses the Qur'an was referring to the evil of associating other gods with God. Now it says that all the keys of the earth and the heavens are in the hands of God. He is the Creator and He is the Provider. He has given directions to all the Prophets sent by Him that they should invite the people to believe in the Unity of God. In this verse the Qur'an is saying that when you already know that in this universe only the fiat of God runs and He created the world out of nothing and conferred existence on nothingness, then it is incumbent on you to thank Him for His favours, and thankfulness consists in worshipping Him alone. If you do this and associate others in your worship of God, this would be thanklessness for His innumerable favours.

This shows that worship is another name for thankfulness, and thanking God for His favours requires that we should not bow our head to any other authority except God. It is another matter

*Philosophy of Worship*

that He confers on us the grace which enables us to thank Him. It is said of Moses that he said: "God, I want to thank Thee for Thy favours, but it is Thou who wilt confer the grace for this upon me. How should I thank Thee for this grace?"

Imam Razi has written something remarkable on this problem of worship and thankfulness. He says: If a king confers a robe of honour upon some person, it is his duty to thank him. And the greatest of kings will not give him anything for his thanks. But God's ways are strange. He created us, gave us eyes, nose, ears, tongue and brain. It is our duty to thank Him for these great favours, and we thank Him with the tongue and other limbs given by Him. But His generosity is so great than He confers on us Paradise for our thankfulness. Our action was limited, but He gives us unlimited reward.



## PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ  
لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۖ اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ  
بَيْنَنَا ۖ وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ ٥

"God is our Lord and your Lord. For us (is the responsibility for) our deeds and for you for your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. God will bring us together and to Him is our final goal" (xlii. 15).

Islam is the first religion which has treated peaceful co-existence as the foundation of collective life. According to Islam, there is no compulsion in matters of belief. It says there is no hardship in matters of religion. This is a matter of the mind and the heart. Whoever wants may accept a belief. He who does not want to accept a belief may reject it. It has also taught that you should not abuse even the idols, lest the polytheists, out of lack of understanding, begin to revile God. It goes further and invites the followers of other religions to co-operate in matters common between them. The Qur'an says: "O People of the Book! come together on a word which is common to us." In this verse also the same

*Peaceful Co-existence*

large-hearted viewpoint about other religions has been repeated. It says: We do not want to enter into any altercation with you in the matter of religion. Our Prophet has already communicated Our message to you. If you do not believe in it, then you may rest content with your own religion. We will rest content with ours. Who is on the right path will be decided by Him to Whom all of us shall return.

This is the Qur'anic teaching of toleration which has led the Muslims to observe the principle that humanity should be respected. When during the days of the Prophet, a deputation of the Christians of Najran visited Medina, the Prophet asked them to stay in his own mosque and did not give thought to the fact that they were believers in Trinity, instead of in the Unity of God.

Today when we are becoming narrow-minded in the matter of respecting one another's beliefs and tenets, it is well to refresh our minds with this teaching of the Qur'an.



## MORE DELICATE THAN GOD'S THRONE

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ  
النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ  
لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ۝

"O ye who believe! raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him in talk as ye may speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds become vain and ye perceive not" (xlix. 2).

This verse shows the unparalleled position of the Holy Prophet. The Arabs were far from being a civilised race due to their nomadic life. They were rough and crude. It was usual with them to talk loudly in the company of men. Sometimes in their conduct they exhibited this peculiarity of temperament, and, in the presence of the Prophet also, they sometimes talked in a loud voice. Thereupon, the Holy Qur'an warned the believers that they should not raise their voice above that of the Prophet while talking and that they should not call him by his name (Muhammad) as they called one another by their names. If this happens all their

*More Delicate than God's Throne*

good works will go vain, all their worship and devotion will be of no avail and their God will be displeased with them.

It is related in the Traditions that when this verse was revealed, some Companions of the Prophet who talked naturally aloud retired into seclusion as a matter of precaution. When the Prophet heard of this, he said that those people who talk naturally aloud have been given an exception.

This verse shows that the love and respect of the Prophet is a part of the faith. When one mentions the Prophet, one should mention him with full respect and one should shower blessings on him, because this is a very delicate matter. A little carelessness in this matter can spoil one's record, both here and in the Hereafter.



### MORE DELICATE THAN GOD'S THRONE

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## ABUSING ONE ANOTHER

وَلَا تَلِيْزُوْا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوْا بِالْأَلْقَابِ  
بِئْسَ الْاِسْمُ الْفُسُوْقُ بَعْدَ الْاِيْمَانِ وَمَنْ  
لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُوْلٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُوْنَ

“Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed and those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong” (xlix. 11).

In the language of the Qur'an and the *Hadith* (Traditions of the Prophet) *Fusuq* means the use of foul language or abuse. This verse tells us that after a man has become a believer, he hates the very name of foul language, not to speak of indulging in it. The believer hates foul language as he hates filth.

According to the Qur'an, abusive language is not merely foul language. Any word which hurts the feelings of another man comes under the definition of abuse. Some people use sarcastic language or nickname others. Both these constitute abuse, and the Prophet says that a Muslim is one from whose hand and tongue other Muslims are safe. Generally, people use foul language in their conversation about

## Abusing One Another

one another's parents. The Prophet once said that the greatest of sins is to abuse one's parents or curse them. The Companions asked: How is it possible for anyone to curse his own parents? The Prophet said: If you use foul language about a man's parents, he will also abuse your parents in retaliation. In another place the Prophet, dwelling on the good qualities of a Muslim, says that he does not indulge in sarcasm, nor does he curse, nor does he use foul or obscene language.

These statements of the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet show that the use of foul or obscene language or talking abusively of others is opposed to Islamic teachings, and any person who desires to lead the right Islamic life would abhor to indulge in such bad habits.



## ISLAMIC SOCIAL SYSTEM

وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا  
أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا  
فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَحِيمٌ

"And spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it. . . . But fear God: for God is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful" (xlix. 12).

In these Divine words light has been thrown on some basic values of the Islamic social system. God says: It does not behove a Muslim that he should undertake a search for finding out the evils of others. He is so busy in struggling against his own evils that he has no time left for finding fault or criticising others. Similarly, it is not for him to speak ill of others behind their backs. God says: To speak ill of others behind their backs is like eating the flesh of a dead brother.

Finding fault with others and backbiting are two evils which arouse the fire of enmity and mutual hostility in a society. They lead to loss of confidence in one another. No one feels that his honour

## Islamic Social System

is safe. This is the reason why Islam, which desires to create an ideal society full of mutual sympathy, is bitterly opposed to these evils. About finding fault with others, it teaches us that if we come upon someone's faults, we should always look to our own self. Are we free from faults? Would we like our faults to be laid bare? If not, why do we like it for others? The Prophet said: Whoever lays a cover on the faults of others, Allah will lay a cover on his faults on the Judgment Day, and whoever lays bare the fault of others, he should know that Allah will disgrace him on the Judgment Day by laying his faults bare. About backbiting Islam teaches that this undoes all the virtues of man. Generally, when a man backbites, he says: I am ready to tell this in the face of such and such a person. But this does not justify backbiting. Backbiting consists in the self-same things, namely, to talk ill of another behind his back for some fault or evil from which he actually suffers. If he is free from that fault or evil, then this is slander, for which there is a regular punishment in the Islamic law.

The gist of this verse is that one Muslim brother should stand guard over the honour of another Muslim brother. If he falls short in this, he will be taken to task on the Day of Judgment.



## LIFE OF THIS WORLD

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ  
وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ ط

"Know ye (all) that the life of this world is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children" (lvii. 20).

There have always been extremists in this world. There are some who, out of love of virtue, forgo this world and thus shun their duties. There are others so engrossed in materialism that they never think of higher moral values. At the advent of Islam also both these groups existed. Therefore, the Qur'an has sometimes condemned those who shun their worldly duties and sometimes advised the worshippers of the world that they should not bank too much on this transitory existence, but also give thought to the future life which will be eternal. In this verse the Qur'an is addressing the worshippers of this world.

God says you should turn your thoughts to the nature of this life which has made you forgetful of the Hereafter. From birth to death it can be divided

*Life of This World*

into four stages. The first stage is childhood when the child is absorbed in play and thinks of nothing else. When you grow up you enter the stage of adolescence and there is a desire to adorn yourself with beautiful things. You like to provide yourselves with materials for embellishment. Living conditions become good, the dress becomes good-looking. All this leads to pomp, display and pride. One begins to hold other people in contempt, and boast of one's ancestry, wealth and position, until one reaches the fourth stage. Bodily strength begins to decline, old age knocks at the door, but one becomes more covetous for that matter, begins to amass wealth and provide for the future of one's children, until death cuts him off and makes an end of everything.

God says, if such is the nature of this world, is it wisdom to sacrifice the eternal life of the Hereafter for the sake of this present transitory life?



## EQUITABLE ECONOMIC SYSTEM

مَا آفَاءَ اللَّهِ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ فَلِلَّهِ  
وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ  
وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ لَا يَكُنْ دُولَةً  
بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ ط

“What God has bestowed on the Apostle (and taken away) from the people of the townships,— belongs to God, to His Apostle and to the kindred and the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer; in order that it may not merely make a circuit between the wealthy among you” (lix. 7).

Wealth in relation to human society is like the blood of the body. If the blood stops circulating in any part of the body, it endangers life. Similarly, if wealth does not circulate in the entire society and a few people accumulate all the wealth, this is not a sign of healthy life. This gives rise to many evils which threaten to break up social solidarity and peace of the society. The principle adumbrated by Islam in this connection has been stated in this verse. It is that wealth should not circulate among a few wealthy people. On the other hand, an economic system

*Equitable Economic System*

should be established in which the needs of all sections of people are satisfied in an honourable manner.

The jurist, Qazi Abu Yusuf, relates that when Persia was conquered, the soldiers, through Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas, demanded that the conquered lands should be distributed among them. Some prominent personalities in Medina supported this demand. But, in the opinion of Umar, this demand was not justified. In refusing their demand, Umar quoted the above verse, among others.

In this verse mention has been made of some persons who deserved to receive a share of the lands coming in the possession of Muslims due to their supremacy. Other persons who deserved a share in the income of these lands have been mentioned in other verses.

In this list have been mentioned the needy, the Emigrants, the poor among the Helpers and others “who are to come after them”.

Qazi Abu Yusuf says: “After reciting these verses, Umar told the Companions that if they distributed all the lands among the present-day Muslims, what would remain for those who come after them?”

According to Qazi Abu Yusuf, Umar understood from this verse that all the conquered lands are a trust for the whole Muslim community.

For the same reason, he issued permanent orders



### *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*

to the Governors of Egypt, Africa, Syria and Persia that no land should be distributed among the Muslims, neither should lands be purchased and sold individually.

In the opinion of Umar, "it (wealth) may not merely make a circuit between the wealthy among you" was a clear indication that the land should form a trust of the Muslim community as a whole, and God does not want that the circulation of wealth should stop in Muslim society with the result that a few people become excessively rich, while others wallow in poverty and misery.

This view was not the view of Umar only. Qazi Abu Yusuf relates: "When Umar recited these verses before the representative gathering of the Muslims and concluded that all the conquered lands were the property of the entire Muslim community, all the Companions of the Holy Prophet agreed with him and the whole community accepted the view that the abandoned lands were the property of the entire Muslim community. They could neither be distributed nor sold and purchased."<sup>1</sup>

It should be remembered that in those days the entire economy was based on agriculture. Traders formed a very small part of the population. A class of government officials and warriors did exist, but

1. *Kitab-al-Kharuj*, pp. 64-65. This is also the view of Khatib Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad*, p. 11.

### *Equitable Economic System*

agriculture was the mainstay of living for ninety per cent of the population. To nationalise the means of living of ninety per cent of the population means that Islam wants to nationalise the general means of production and purge the society of all individual exploitation and monopolisation. Otherwise it would not have condemned the accumulation of wealth in a few hands and proposed a programme to make an end of it.



## OBEDIENCE TO THE PROPHET

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ  
فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ۝

“So take what the Apostle assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you and fear God: for God is strict in punishment” (lix. 7).

This verse is a part of the previous verse. It was revealed in a particular context as has been related. After migration to Medina, the Prophet, on a certain occasion, distributed the booty among the Muslims. With a view to removing the disparity between the Emigrants and the Helpers, he gave away the entire property to the Emigrants. Only two persons among the Helpers received their share. It would have been quite natural if some of the Helpers felt dissatisfied. But God revealed this verse and dispelled their misgivings.

The above Divine revelation does not merely shed light on this particular incident. A fundamental and important fact has been stressed in this verse. God says: Religion consists in following the Prophet. Whatever the commands should be obeyed and if he wills that the Muslims should desist from something,

*Obedience to the Prophet*

it is necessary for them to desist from it. This shows that all the words and actions of the Holy Prophet enjoy the same status as the Qur'an. This is the reason why the Holy Qur'an itself has not explained the details of the fundamentals of religion and left them to the *Sunnah* (practice) of the Prophet. For example, it has commanded us to offer the prayers, but it has not told us about how we should stand, bow and prostrate, or how many rak'ats of prayers we should offer. It has asked to pay the poor-tax, but it has not laid down any rates for the poor-tax. It has directed us to perform the Pilgrimage, but it has not told us how many times in our life we should perform the Pilgrimage as a religious duty. It has asked us to fast, but it has not told us how many times we should fast. All these things have been clarified by the Holy Prophet and these clarifications enjoy the same position as the Qur'an, because God not merely revealed the Qur'an in the form of a book but also revealed another Qur'an in the person of the Holy Prophet.



## CONQUEST OF THE UNIVERSE

اللَّهُ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلُكُ فِيهِ  
 بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ○  
 وَسَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا  
 مِّنْهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ○

“It is God Who has subjected the sea to you, that ships may sail through it by His command, that you may seek of His bounty and that ye may be grateful. And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on the earth: behold, in that there are signs indeed for those who reflect” (xiv. 12-13).

Basically, the Qur'an is not a book of science and physics. This is a book of guidance. Therefore, it is vain to look for predictions in it about different inventions and discoveries. But because this book is for the guidance of man till the end of time, it is in harmony with the spirit of the times. It is not an impediment to human progress. It encourages man to make progress and it contains indications covering all matters which will arise in future till the end of time. Through these indications, it made those possibilities clear fourteen hundred years ago,

*Conquest of the Universe*

on which future scientific progress will be based.

First of all it declared that man is the vicegerent of God on this earth. “He taught Adam all the names” and made man superior to the angels in knowledge. The Qur'an made it clear that the world was created for man, not man for the world.

Regarding conveyances, it informed us that He created for man all those conveyances which are of use to him and He will create other conveyances of which you have no knowledge. By saying this it encompassed all those conveyances which will be invented in future till the end of time.

It told us about Solomon that the air was subjected to him. Many gifted persons were present in his court, until when Solomon desired to receive the throne of the Queen of Sheba from over a distance of hundreds of miles, one of his courtiers brought the throne in the twinkling of an eye.

In the verse cited above, guidance has been given in principle for all discoveries and inventions which are to come till the end of time. The world of space, it is apparent, is also a world between the earth and the skies. This world has also been subjected to man, according to this verse. From land and sea till the regions of space, the flag of human greatness will flutter by the will of God. It is yet to be seen as to what would be the contribution of Muslims to it who believe in the Qur'an.



# QUR'AN AND PAKISTAN

وَإِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُسْتَضْعَفُونَ  
فِي الْأَرْضِ تَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَتَخَطَّفَكُمُ  
النَّاسُ فَآوَاكُمْ وَأَيَّدَكُم بِنَصْرِهِ وَرَزَقَكُمُ  
مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ۝

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذْ كُنْتُمْ فِي ضَعْفٍ عَلَى اللَّهِ  
إِذْ هَمَّ قَوْمٌ أَنْ يَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ  
أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا  
اللَّهَ ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۝

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ

فَكَلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَلًا طَيِّبًا وَاشْكُرُوا  
نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ۝

These verses of the Holy Qur'an are closely related with Pakistan and our own life here. Although these verses were revealed in a different context, it seems as if they describe our own conditions.

## *Qur'an and Pakistan*

In the first verse it is said :

"Call to mind when ye were a small (band) despised through the land and afraid that men may despoil and kidnap you. But He provided a safe asylum for you, strengthened you with His aid, and gave you good things for sustenance that ye might be grateful" (viii. 26).

This verse takes us to our past, when we were subjects of a foreign power. We were at that time considered to be a minority in relation to a majority. We lacked strength and power. But, by the mercy of God, we got a new homeland, Pakistan.

In the second verse, God says :

"O ye who believe! call in remembrance the favour of God unto you when certain men formed the design to stretch out their hands against you. But God held back their hands from you. So fear God. And on God let believers put all their trust" (v. 11).

This verse brings to our mind the war of 1965, when falsehood clashed with truth. It is a special favour of God that He gave us victory in this war.

In the third verse, it is stated :

"Then We made you heirs in the land after them, to see how ye would behave" (x. 14).

This shows that while freedom is a great gift of God, it is at the same time a hard test. Now we have to raise the standard of our individual and collective conduct and show that we are worthy of this



## *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*

reat gift.

In the fourth verse, God says :

“So eat of the sustenance which God has provided for you, lawful and good, and be grateful for the favours of God, if it is He Whom ye serve” (xvi. 114).

The land given us by God after we attained our freedom is rich in natural resources. These gifts should make us grateful to Him and the right way for expressing this gratitude is that we should make proper use of these resources.

It is a fact that God has showered innumerable favours on us, the people of Pakistan. Therefore, it is incumbent on us that we should make ourselves into a grateful nation before God and His creatures.

THE END



ALSO BY MAULANA KAUSAR NIAZI

### CREATION OF ADAM

The author combines the traditional training of the old with the spirit of enquiry of the modern. He has always a valid ground for what he believes or rejects. Being a scholar of this disposition, he could hardly leave the Darwinian theory of evolution without examining it closely.

In this book he has critically examined the theory raising some fairly valid points against it. According to him, Adam's descent on earth as the vicegerent of the Almighty was far more noble and inspiring than his chimpanzee past wrapped in total darkness. He has quoted European writers to prove that man did not evolve from a monkey through a protracted experimentation with a mass of idolatrous ideas; man, he says, started his journey on this planet long ago as a monotheist being, going occasionally astray, to be brought back to the righteous path by a long line of Prophets—Muhammad being the last of them.

### FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

It is a unique book presenting a study of Islam in depth and projecting the fundamental truths of Islam in the clearest possible terms. It is also a masterly exercise in analysing and demonstrating how the fundamental truths of Islam can be applied in practice to effectively solve problems arising at individual, communal and national planes in the context of changing times.

### THE MIRROR OF TRINITY

Christianity is undoubtedly one of the revealed religions but it seems to have lost its intrinsic values through the passage of time. The way Christianity is being preached by its clergymen leads the people to grope in darkness than dawning the celestial light on them. Maulana Kausar Niazi as a scholar and an ecclesiast has raised the curtain from underhand activities of the Christian missionaries. The book has mirrored into them as to how they bring a bad name to a fair task. It is a study of Christ and the religion he preached based on facts.

SH. MUHAMMAD ASHRAF

KASHMIRI BAZAR LAHORE (Pakistan)